RELOCATING MOROLICA:
VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN POST-MITCH HONDURAS

By

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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This dissertation responds to the need for a greater understanding of the little explored reconstruction stages that follow the immediate emergency phase after a disaster. Specifically, this study analyzes the impact of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction on the survival strategies adopted by the inhabitants of Morolica, a Southern Honduran town swept away by floods caused by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998. Guided by a gendered political ecological framework, this study uses a combination of qualitative and participatory research methods complemented with quantitative methods and data analysis.

Hurricane Mitch, one of the worst natural disasters to hit Central America in recorded history, resulted in widespread death and destruction due to a convergence of the highly vulnerable economy, unequal distribution of resources, widespread food insecurity and severe environmental degradation that characterized Honduras prior to the disaster. In Morolica, the only town relocated after the hurricane, a number of

humanitarian agencies were collaborating with the local population on the reconstruction of the community.

Findings indicate that both the disaster and the subsequent recovery interventions had a differential impact on the affected women and men. Gender was central to positioning both women and men *vis-à-vis* the civilian and religious reconstruction authorities working in Morolica, and determined people's access to the assistance provided. Post-disaster recovery efforts had a profound impact on the religious beliefs and practices of the Morolican population, as several Evangelical missions collaborated with the population on the reconstruction of their community. The rates and reasons reported for conversion to Evangelism were different for each gender, further underscoring the importance of considering gender differentials in any study of social change.

The significance of this dissertation lies in what it reveals about the ways women and men cope with overwhelming destruction and change caused not just by catastrophes or post-disaster resettlement schemes, but also by the efforts of powerful religious and humanitarian institutions. The case of Morolica also illustrates how the historical and current political, economic, religious and environmental factors that produced the condition of vulnerability of much of the Honduran population were as much a cause of the catastrophe as Hurricane Mitch itself.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation analyzes the livelihood strategies adopted by the women and men of the Honduran town of Morolica in their efforts to reconstruct their lives after their community was so devastated by the floods caused by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998 that relocation became the only viable option. The relationship among the political ecological context of Honduras, differentials in socially constructed vulnerability and resilience, and post-disaster recovery efforts are integral elements of this study. Specifically, this dissertation focuses on the gender-differentiated capabilities and constraints facing the community of Morolica and its members, in the context of the historical, political, economic, religious, and environmental considerations of Honduras. Guided by a gendered political ecological framework, this study uses a combination of qualitative and participatory research methods complemented with quantitative methods and data analysis.

This chapter presents an overview of the most salient aspects addressed in this dissertation, including a summary of the impact of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, the destruction of the town of Morolica, and the subsequent events that led to the resettlement of the community to a new location in March of 2000. A literature review discussing the most developed approaches to the study of disasters and relocation is presented next. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the structure of the dissertation and the contents of the subsequent chapters.

Overview

Disasters are unfolding processes involving a society's everyday relations with the natural and social environment that continue into the reconstruction period as people strive to recover from the damage to their livelihoods and, in turn, establish new conditions. The destabilization caused by a disaster forces people to either avail themselves of new material, social and human resources, or to reconstruct their lives and livelihoods with the remaining resources available. These new post-disaster livelihood strategies, however, can threaten the long-term reconstruction process by intensifying destructive activities and destabilizing the ecological balance (Blaikie *et al.* 1994). On the other hand, the new opportunities presented by reconstruction circumstances can potentially result in conditions of increased resiliency. This dissertation analyzes the impact of post-disaster reconstruction efforts on the survival strategies adopted by the inhabitants of Morolica, and examines the conditions of vulnerability or resilience facing the affected women and men.

Hurricane Mitch, which swept across Central America in October 1998, is considered to be one of the worst natural disasters to hit this area in recorded history, only surpassed by the Guatemalan earthquake of 1976, which resulted in a death toll of 25,000. Mitch, as a natural phenomenon, had a twelve-day life span—from October 21 to November 1—and turned out to be one of the most deadly Atlantic hurricanes in recent times. Hurricane Fifi, which killed up to 10,000 people in September of 1974, was the most recent hurricane to inflict comparable damage in Central America (Haggerty and Millet 1995:43). The catastrophe that Hurricane Mitch provoked was the worst disaster ever experienced at a national level in Honduras.

When Hurricane Mitch devastated Southern Honduras most of the population was already living in chronic poverty and facing severe resource constraints. Families in the Municipality of Morolica, located in the southern Department of Choluteca, were extremely poor, and illiteracy rates, infant mortality rates, and undernutrition levels were reportedly very high even before Mitch. However, the population of the town of Morolica—the focus of this study—seemed to have been significantly better off than their neighbors in the Municipality.

On October 30 and 31, 1998 lashing rains born of Hurricane Mitch transformed the lazy, 12-foot-wide Choluteca River, on whose banks Morolica was located, into a mile-wide torrent of mud, boulders, automobiles and tree trunks that overran the community. Although the town disappeared, swept away by the rivers, amazingly its inhabitants did not. In effect, of a population of 1,615 only 12 people died—one family of 9 and one family of 3 who did not evacuate. By next morning it was clear that the site of the 175-year-old town of Morolica could never be inhabited again.

Morolicans lived in tents for approximately two months. In January of 1999 most residents moved to a shantytown of makeshift shacks in a hamlet known as El Tejar, which is part of the Municipality of Morolica, just down the hill from what later became Nueva Morolica, the relocated community. In February of that same year townspeople and construction workers cleared the site chosen for the relocation of the community, and construction of the new 312 houses began in late March of 1999. The new community was built by the women and men of Morolica themselves, under the supervision of professional construction foremen.

The first 100 houses, built with funding from CAM (Central American Mission), were completed in September 1999. On September 13, an inauguration ceremony attended by representatives from CAM, ASIECAH (*Asociación de Inglesias Evangélicas Centro Americanas de Honduras*; Association of Evangelical Central American Churches), and the central offices of the Association of Evangelical Churches from Dallas, Texas, was held in what became Nueva Morolica. The remaining 212 houses were built with funds from Malteser, a German Catholic humanitarian agency. Final relocation to Nueva Morolica began in March of 2000. At the completion of this research in July of 2000, most Morolicans had relocated to the new site.

Post-disaster recovery efforts in Honduras, including the resettlement of Morolica, involved local, national and international assistance. The following section argues that political ecology is a suitable approach to the study of post-disaster reconstruction and resettlement because, while it is sensitive to site-specific conditions, it also acknowledges that forces beyond the particular site influence local outcomes. This approach, however, has rarely given priority to the role that gender relations play in shaping the interaction of human groups and their environment, and the differential constraints and opportunities that women and men face in reconstruction/resettlement situations. Similarly, the long-term adaptations and reconstruction efforts that follow the initial emergency stage have not been sufficiently explored. Notable exceptions include Oliver-Smith's 10 year study of the reconstruction of the town of Yungay after the 1970 Peruvian earthquake (1986). By using a gendered political ecology approach (Schmink 1999) that examines the relationships between women and men, natural resources, and

the local and larger socio-political structures as they develop in the little explored

reconstruction stages, this study attempts to fill these gaps in the literature.

Trends in the Anthropology of Disaster

Until recently, most scientific studies of disasters were carried out by researchers

from the disciplines of sociology and geography. Their work tended to focus on Europe

and North America, even though most disaster events take place in other regions of the

world. In contrast, since its emergence, anthropology has studied all geographical areas

and human groups, emphasizing traditional societies and developing regions.

In recent years, anthropology has made important contributions to the study of

disasters. Fist of all, anthropology has contributed its primary research method,

ethnographic fieldwork. The incorporation of ethnographic, long-term, intensive field

research methods has enhanced our understanding of the factors that result in conditions

of increased vulnerability or resilience to disaster events, highlighting the importance of

variables such as gender, age, social class, language, religious affiliation and ethnicity,

among others. Analyses of these factors allow us to examine, for instance, why certain

individuals or social groups are more likely than others to suffer the consequences of a

catastrophe, or what are the social practices that determine that coping capacities are

unequally distributed among the members of a given society. Livelihood strategies,

natural resource use, housing construction, gender relations, power and decision-making

structures, place attachment and other socio-cultural themes of traditional anthropological

interest are intrinsically related to disaster situations (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999:3).

Non-anthropological research methods that limit themselves to documenting the

immediate impact of a disaster, without exploring the potentially resulting conditions of

cultural continuity and change, cannot examine these socio-cultural factors with the necessary depth. The recent emergence of different paradigms and conceptual models within the field of disaster anthropology can be interpreted as an indication that this sub-field has been progressing and evolving in the last few years.

As previously mentioned, Oliver-Smith and Hoffman (1999) have identified four main perspectives to the anthropological study of disasters: historical and archaeological perspectives; socio-cultural and behavioral approaches; applied anthropology, and political ecology. These four approaches are not necessarily mutually-exclusive, and they complement, and draw upon, investigations carried out in other disciplines. Regardless of their focus, most disaster anthropologists share a number of fundamental premises. Disasters are conceptualized as resulting from the interaction of a potentially destructive agent—natural or technological—and "a population in a socially produced condition of vulnerability" (ibid.:4). Therefore, disasters do not solely reflect the impact of natural or human-made extremes, but also the interaction of such elements with the social, political, economic, and environmental characteristics of the population. In short, anthropology considers disasters as eminently social events.

As I will discuss at length in later sections of this chapter, I consider gendered political ecology to be the most suitable approach to this study of gender-differentiated vulnerability and resilience in Morolica. However, I also acknowledge the contributions that the other anthropological perspectives have made to the study of disaster situations.

The diachronic focus of historical/archaeological investigations has greatly enhanced our understanding of the temporal dimension of disasters. Archeological research has revealed the material components of culture, such as shelter, land use, tools

and funerary ensembles. This type of information clarifies questions regarding the material factors that determine the vulnerability or resilience to disasters of a given population. Historical research, based on the analysis of annals, chronicles and archival materials, reveals the succession of political, economic and demographic patterns through time, which can be useful in tracing the emergence of vulnerable groups in societies. As a whole, archaeological and historical research provide us with information on pre-disaster conditions, and contribute to a better understanding of the characteristics and impacts of disaster events and processes (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999:4-5).

Anthropologists working from a sociocultural/behavioral perspective generally consider disasters as catalysts of change in society's structure and organization. Ethnographic field research has shown that disasters may affect the economy, political institutions, kinship system, and religious beliefs, among other factors (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999:5-6). The study of the behavior of the people affected by a disaster is a research focus that anthropology shares with other social sciences. An important dimension of the sociocultural/behavioral perspective is the study of risk perception. The scientific study of risk perception emerged in 1969 with sociologist Chauncey Starr's publication of his article "Social Benefits versus Technological Risk". In this article, Starr proposed a series of numerical relations between the risk and the benefit associated with certain activities. According to Starr, these equations could be used to evaluate the acceptability of similar activities, both in the present and in the future. Anthropology has made an important contribution to this field by revealing that significant differences can be noted in the way risk is perceived by the different stakeholders—such as community members versus external "experts"; or development agency personnel versus

environmentalists. Anthropologists have also incorporated physical, social, ideological and cosmological dimensions into their research, contributing to making their study of risk perception much more reflective of the local context.

Applied anthropology can be defined as "the branch of anthropology that concerns itself with trying to improve people's lives or monitoring others' efforts to do so" (Ember and Ember 1990:508). Applied anthropologists specializing in disaster research usually focus on practical issues of prediction, prevention and mitigation. Although the need for external assistance is often undeniable, anthropological research has drawn attention to the dangers of implementing standardized, culturally inappropriate relief efforts, which may compound the difficulties experienced by the victims and produce dependency and further dislocation. "Traditional adaptations to environments and indigenous technical knowledge have been suggested as approaches to reducing disaster deaths and damage and decreasing vulnerability" (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999:10-11). Applied anthropologists working in disaster situations have also served as cultural brokers, facilitating the interactions among local persons and institutions, and external relief and reconstruction agencies.

The fourth trend in the anthropological study of disaster is the political ecology approach, which combines elements of cultural ecological and political economic frameworks. This perspective conceptualizes disasters as emerging in the context of a historically produced pattern of vulnerability, which is manifested "in the location, infrastructure, sociopolitical organization, production and distribution systems, and ideology of a society" (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002:3).

Political Ecology and the Vulnerability Approach

Since the early 1980s the growth of cultural ecological perspectives in anthropology and cultural geography has led many scholars in those disciplines to reconsider disasters less as the result of geophysical extremes such as storms, earthquakes, avalanches or droughts, and more as functions of the social structure. This approach focuses on the effectiveness of societal adaptation to the total environment, including the natural, modified and constructed *milieus* of which the community is a part (Hewitt 1983). The linkages between the structure of human-environment relations and the larger framework of historical and structural processes, however, have received less attention from this perspective.

The field of political ecology is an alternative approach that emerged in response to the increasing scholarly and public scrutiny of human-environmental interactions, especially in developing countries. Political ecology has provided scholars with a framework to integrate environmental issues within socio-economic and political processes (Bryant and Bailey 1997). Political ecology is based on the premise that political, social, and economic considerations mediate the dynamic interactions between humans and their environment. This perspective integrates political economy and cultural ecology by exploring the connections between the current and historical influences of the natural environment on human groups, and the impact of larger political and economic forces that characterize the society of which the people are members (Campbell 1996:6).

Eric Wolf is credited with having been the first anthropologist to use the term "political ecology". The phrase appeared in 1972, in his response to a symposium on *Dynamics of Ownership in the Circum-Alpine Area*, titled "Ownership and Political

Ecology" (Wolf 1972:201-5) where he proposed a research model that ". . . combine[s] our inquires into multiple local ecological contexts with a greater knowledge of social and political history . . ." and " . . . the study of inter-group relations in wider structural fields . . . " (ibid.:204-5). Furthermore, he proposed that more attention be paid to "decision-making power in the family", to household structure, and to ". . .the integration of these households into . . . the political system and . . . the local ecological context" (ibid.). All these themes proposed by Wolf in his seminal 1972 article remain today as fundamental components of modern political ecological research. For instance, in their book *Land Degradation and Society* (1987), Blaikie and Brookfield propose political ecology as an approach that combines the concerns of ecology and political economy, examines the interconnections between different level of analysis—local groups, the state, world economy—and the way that international capitalism and the state impact natural resources and local people (as cited in Stonich 1993:25-26). Thus, Blaikie's and Brookfield's more modern approach can be considered an elaboration on the model already proposed by Wolf 15 years earlier.

Another relevant example is Susan Stonich's study of *The Political Ecology of Poverty and Environmental Destruction in Honduras* (1993). Stonich's research demonstrates how this framework can be made more inclusive by incorporating other concerns—such as demographic factors including population growth, density and distribution—not always integrated in other political ecologically oriented studies. By combining political ecology and demography, Stonich makes a convincing argument that development, population, poverty and environmental destruction in southern Honduras are closely linked factors.

Based on Schmink and Wood's fifteen years of research, *Contested Frontiers in Amazonia* (1992) is an analysis of the process of frontier change in the state of Pará in the Brazilian Amazon. Using an interdisciplinary approach that, like Stonich's, combines political ecology with demography and sociology, Schmink and Wood show the linkages between local, national and international events as they relate to deforestation, settlement patterns, rural violence, and competition for resources. While there are obvious similarities between the work of Stonich and that of Schmink and Wood—their respective volumes address issues of development, population, rural impoverishment and environmental destruction—the differences are also notable. Stonich's analysis is more concerned with economic changes and their human and environmental repercussions (ibid.:13), with little discussion of ideological factors. Schmink's and Wood's research, on the other hand, is largely concerned with issues of conflict and power differentials, in which ideology plays a fundamental role. For instance, they show the influence of Catholic ideology in the formation of organized peasant resistance to inequitable colonization practices (ibid.:180-3), and discuss how the belief that *garimpeiros* (small-scale miners) were contributing to pay the national debt mediated the conflicts between gold miners and the Brazilian government (ibid.:88).

Schmink's and Wood's incorporation of religious and ideological concerns into their political ecological analysis of social and environmental change in Amazonia provides a particularly useful framework that can be applied to the anthropological study of disasters. "Disasters offer a lens through which to view the relationship between the ideological and the material" (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002:11). Religious systems play an important role in formulating the set of acceptable beliefs and behaviors that

articulates the spiritual, political, socio-economic, and ecological systems of its followers. They affect the way women and men think and act. They may also influence people's understandings of the ultimate origin of disasters, which has clear implications for future levels of vulnerability or resilience. Furthermore, religious beliefs can in turn be impacted by disaster events and the subsequent post-disaster reconstruction measures implemented. For instance, in Morolica, rates of conversion to Evangelism have increased after the hurricane, as several Evangelical missions are collaborating with the population on the reconstruction of their community. The role of religion as a catalyst for change in Post-Mitch Morolica will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

An important analytical advantage of political ecology as an approach to the study of disasters is based on the contention that human-environment relations are fundamentally social in nature. Human-environmental relations, key to the evolution of disasters, are always mediated by the social relations through which the members of a society interact with their surroundings. Wisner (1976, 1978) started a process of inquiry into the interaction of political-economic structures with ecological processes that culminated in an alternative disaster research agenda that emphasized the need to work simultaneously on the political economic and the environmental dimensions. Watts's study of *Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria* (1983) uses a political ecological approach to examine the changing character of food production and environmental risk—related to drought and famine—in northern Nigeria. Watts, who does not identify himself as a political ecologist, does nonetheless advocate the integration of political economy and ecological considerations. He rejects geographically-oriented disaster research and human ecology alike for being a-historical, for neglecting

the role of political economic structures, and for treating environmental risks as "disturbances" instead of "recursive" features of the environment. He views famine as a an economic, social and environmental phenomenon, and suggests that analyzing famine also "demands a careful deconstruction of the social, political and economic structure of the society so afflicted, and of its historically specific systems of production" (ibid.:19). Watt's study of famine in Nigeria is a relatively early example of the application of political ecology to the anthropological study of disasters. Similarly, Blaikie *et al.* (1994) have evaluated the social construction of natural hazards, disasters and vulnerability, stressing the interrelated socio-political, economic, and environmental dimensions of disasters.

By adopting a political ecological approach to the study of disasters, anthropologists focus their attention on "the dynamic relationships between a human population, its socially generated and politically enforced productive and allocative patterns, and its physical environment, all in the formation of patterns of vulnerability and response to disaster" (Oliver-Smith 1998:189). These social relations are maintained by the dominant forms of production in a process that determines the patterns of resource allocation and other forms of social, political and economic differentiation. This differentiation, in turn, privileges some individuals and groups with enhanced security, while subjecting others to systemic risks and hazards (ibid.). In conclusion, vulnerability to disasters is a socially differentiated phenomenon that can be better understood by adopting a political ecological approach.

The concept of vulnerability has been developed in the last decade as an alternative, or a complement, to the dominant "hazards paradigm". The hazards paradigm

focuses on the hazards themselves, and frequently encourages top-down planning and standardized, technocratic prediction and mitigation measures (Blaikie *et al.* 1994:218). The vulnerability approach, on the other hand, focuses upon who is affected, and their ability to withstand, mitigate and recover from the damage caused by disasters and other crises; this strategy underscores the importance of the socioeconomic order and the ecological relations of life in particular places. "In this perspective, risk is seen to depend primarily upon on-going societal conditions" (Hewitt 1997:141). This interpretation of risk recognizes the important extent to which disaster depends upon the social order, its everyday relations to the environment, as well as the larger historical circumstances that shape people's environment. Hewitt, who recognizes that vulnerability is determined by individual characteristics such as "gender and wealth, . . . influence or lack of it" (1997:142), refers to this perspective as *the human ecology of endangerment*" (ibid.: 143; italics in the original).

The concept of vulnerability is a fundamental element to the political ecology of disasters. Political ecologists start from the premise that environmental change is not a neutral process; generally, costs and benefits are unequally distributed among individuals and groups, reflecting existing social and economic inequalities. Moreover, the differentiated social and economic impact of environmental change also has political implications, since the relative power of some actors in relation to others influences the impact that the event has on them. It follows that people's economic and political position in society influences their vulnerability to disasters and environmental crises (Bryant and Bailey 1997:28-29). People's position in society can therefore be viewed as

a reflection of a multiplicity of factors, including the unequal distribution of political and economic power.

The socially-differentiated impact that crises have on the affected population have also been studied in the context of resettlement. Scudder and Colson (1982) have pointed out that wealthier or more politically powerful relocatees are often able to shape the direction and pace of the relocation by, for instance, influencing government policy. There is also evidence indicating that women fare worse than men, especially in government sponsored resettlement schemes. Post-disaster recovery efforts, including the resettlement of devastated communities, commonly involve local, state, national and international assistance. Therefore, political ecology is also a suitable approach to the study of post-disaster reconstruction and resettlement because, while it is sensitive to site-specific conditions, it also acknowledges that forces beyond the particular site influence local outcomes.

Models for the Study of Displaced Populations

Involuntary resettlement is not a new phenomenon. There is considerable precedent for community relocations, both spontaneous—when the decision to move is made by the individuals involved—and involuntary—when authorities impose on others the decision to relocate. Historically, people have been forced to relocate as a result of changes in the natural environment—depletion of natural resources, natural disasters—and changes in the constructed environment caused by war, the persecution of minority groups or economic collapse (Perry and Mushkatel 1984:156).

Initially, the study of forced migration was dominated by research on political refugees, with much less attention given to environmentally or developmentally driven

displacement (Indra 1999:xii). Nevertheless, a growing number of case studies on displaced populations as a result of disasters or development projects have appeared in the last decades (Colson 1971; Lawson 1982; Koening and Horowitz 1988; Guggenheim 1989; McCully 1996; Indra 1999). Compulsory relocation is becoming a central element of development concerns. The factors that create the need for involuntary resettlement, the process that takes place during relocation, and the measures that could be taken to improve the outcomes of resettlement programs are central questions in the development agenda today. The increasing interest in resettlement results from the more general concern over the negative environmental and social impacts caused by large infrastructure projects. (Horowitz *et al.* 1993:5). The integration of gender analysis into forced migration research and practice, however, is only in its infancy.

The most developed theoretical frameworks for the analysis of relocation are Scudder and Colson's model of response to involuntary resettlement (1982), and Cernea's risk and reconstructing model for resettling displaced populations (1997). Also relevant are the criteria developed by Coburn *et al.* assess the success or failure of a resettlement plan (1984), Oliver-Smith's re-examination of the factors that may lead to the failure or rejection of resettlement projects (1991), and De Wet's environmentally-based approach (1988).

The Scudder/Colson model is based on the premise that the physiological, psychological and socio-cultural stress experienced by displaced populations results in predictable behavioral patterns. Scudder's and Colson's formulations posit that adaptation to involuntary resettlement occurs in four clearly demarcated stages: recruitment, transition, potential development and incorporation (1982). The recruitment

stage refers to the formulation of the resettlement plan by the relocation authorities; the community itself is not directly involved in this stage. The transition stage begins when the relocatees discover that they are to be moved, and involves the move itself and the period immediately after it. This is an intensely stressful period during which people adopt conservative, risk-avoiding strategies and familiar practices. Behavior in the newly settled areas is strongly kin- and neighbor-oriented, geared to the meeting of subsistence needs, and characterized by a reduced participation in community activities and cultural life (ibid.). However, once—and if—this stage is completed "[i]nnovation will . . . occur more rapidly among relocated communities which have reached potential development than among neighboring non-relocated communities" (De Wet 1988:181). This tendency, Scudder hypothesizes, is due to the uprooting process which, while initially acting as a stressor, also reduces the restraints imposed by the institutions, values and behavioral patterns that shaped life in the community prior to the move (Scudder's personal communication to De Wet 1985; cited in De Wet 1988:181). The stage of potential development takes place when the majority of relocatees have regained the degree of economic self-sufficiency they had before relocation. People respond to opportunities presented by their new environment, shift from a conservative to a more risk-taking stance and diversify their activities and investments. The reemergence of local leadership and people's increased participation in community activities also characterize this stage. The final stage according to this model is called handing over or incorporation, and is usually only reached when a second generation has grown up in the new area and has assumed command (Scudder and Colson 1982:280-283).

De Wet's approach (1988) is an elaboration on the Scudder/Colson model. His main contribution is the suggestion that, by paying greater attention to environmental considerations, the analysis of displacees' behavior is made more comprehensive than by focusing exclusively on stress-related responses.

Coburn *et al.* posit that the most important factors in determining the success or failure of a resettlement project are the physical environment of the new settlement, the relationship to the old village, and the capability of the community to develop itself (1984:52). They further suggest that the success or failure of a settlement can be judged by the extent to which the new community has become self-reliant (ibid.). They assess this condition on the basis of the following factors:

- Number of houses still occupied;

- Modification of the form and internal layout of the provided housing;

- Degree of maintenance and shelter and the state of repair;

- Development of gardens, tree planting and enclosures thereof;

- Extension of buildings and investments in them; and

- Construction of private buildings (Coburn *et al.* 1984:52).

Based on his own research in Latin America, as well as on his analysis of cases in the Middle East, Oliver-Smith (1991) has suggested that the factors proposed by Coburn *et al.* (1984) can be subsumed into four major categories: site, layout, housing and popular participation. Popular participation—or lack thereof—appears to be one of the most relevant factors resulting in the potential success or failure of a post-disaster relocation project. In fact, dissatisfaction with the site, the layout or design of the settlement, and housing construction frequently result from a lack of consultation with

the people (Oliver-Smith 1991). My own research in Morolica seems to confirm Oliver-Smith's predictions. High levels of popular participation in the planning and construction of the relocated community indeed resulted in general satisfaction with the site, layout and design of the new settlement, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Another more recent formulation on resettlement has been developed by Cernea (1997). He posits that eight impoverishment risks (landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, increased morbidity and mortality, food insecurity, loss of access to common property and social disarticulation) threaten people's ability to reconstruct their lives in relocation contexts (ibid.). Even though Cernea's model is centered on socioeconomic variables (ibid.:1570), he also acknowledges the role that "the cultural and psychological stress experienced by people who are forcibly uprooted" affects people's individual and group behavior (ibid.:1569). Although primarily intended to guide the analysis of development-induced relocation processes—a phenomenon that results in much larger numbers of displaced people than wars or environmental factors— Cernea's model, he argues, can also be extended, with appropriate adjustments, to the analysis of displacement caused by civil war, ethnic persecution or natural disasters. Cernea further proposes that appropriate rehabilitation measures to address the eight risks need to be implemented, in order to minimize the impoverishment of the population. Clear parallelisms can be found between Cernea's "impoverishment risks" model of relocation and the vulnerability approach to disaster research. Both models emphasize the notion of differential impacts based on people's position in society. In both cases appropriate rehabilitation measures would have to address the existing social and economic inequalities found among the affected population.

Limitations of Current Approaches

Scudder and Colson emphasize the role of the stress involved in the process of relocation, and seek to explain relocatees' behavior as a response to the stresses confronting them. However, while stress is the fundamental factor accounting for relocatees' responses during the recruitment and transition phases, it is only vaguely relevant during potential development and incorporation, which lessens the model's explanatory power during these later stages. Furthermore, not all relocated communities can be judged to have passed through all four stages described by Scudder and Colson. The authors admit that, since scholars have not systematically followed resettled communities through all four stages, less is known about the potential development and incorporation phases than about the two previous ones (ibid.1982:281).

The Scudder/Colson model makes little reference to differentiated responses by women and men. The possibility that different behaviors may be displayed by those who are economically and psychologically better adapted to relocation is pointed out, but not in relationship to gender. The critique of the Scudder/Colson model also applies to De Wet's approach, which is an elaboration of the previous one. Although environmental considerations are clearly important factors that influence people's lives—both in displacement and under 'normal' circumstances—De Wet seems to ignore that individuals' relationship with the environment is also gender-differentiated. He suggests that "the greater the environmental modification involved, the greater will be the corresponding stress" (186). Obviously, because women's and men's positions in both the environment and society are different, varying degrees of environmental modification

will differentially impact women and men, and their responses to the resulting stress will also be different.

The criteria developed by Coburn *et al.* for assessing the success or failure of a resettlement project refer exclusively to housing. Poor site selection, inappropriate settlement design and unsatisfactory housing are among the factors leading to the abandonment of the site. However, in many instances of involuntary resettlement, people are forced to evacuate their original communities before any housing can be provided by the authorities—if housing is provided at all. Observations on house building/maintenance are, therefore, only limited indicators of the living circumstances of the individuals who inhabit them. Furthermore, no analysis of decision making regarding house construction and repair—such allocation of time, labor and assets—who spends more time in the house and, consequently would benefit more from house improvement, and so on, is suggested. The indicators proposed by Coburn *et al.* are designed to assess the relative success or failure of a resettlement project based on clearly defined observable factors. This approach can be a useful complement to more developed models but, on its own, does not constitute a sufficient approach for the analysis of forced resettlement.

Similarly, Cernea's model is not intended to substitute other approaches. Rather, "[it] can also be connected to other existing conceptual frameworks, to achieve complementarity of perspectives and more in-depth knowledge" (ibid.:1571). For instance, it seems possible to analyze how the eight risks he identifies are manifested through the four stages predicted by Scudder and Colson. Regarding the applicability of Cernea's model to guide rehabilitation interventions, he merely points out that the risk of

landlessnes can be prevented through land-based relocation strategies, joblessness through sustainable reemployment, and so on. Although he acknowledges that differences between particularly vulnerable groups—tribal groups, women and children—call for targeted responses (ibid.:1576), no specific guidelines as to how to address these differences are offered.

I have argued that political ecology is a suitable approach to the study of post-disaster reconstruction and resettlement because, while it is sensitive to site-specific conditions, it also acknowledges that forces beyond the particular site influence local outcomes. This approach, however, has rarely given priority to the role that gender relations play in shaping the interaction of human groups and their environment, and the differential constraints and opportunities that women and men face in reconstruction/resettlement situations.

Gendered Alternatives to the Study of Disasters and Relocation

During the last few years an increasing number of political ecological studies have addressed women's issues. Feminist scholars have proposed that women are often at the center of environmental struggles (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). However, an exclusively female-focused approach that isolates women and does not provide comparisons with the larger society and to men can be as limited and biased as prior male-focused or gender-blind approaches. Furthermore, analyses of women in isolation tend to treat them as a homogeneous category, while the concept of gender involves the disaggregation of women's and men's roles and responsibilities by socio-economic class (Spring 1995:8). These distinctions have been acknowledged by scholars and practitioners working in the field of development. The initial WID (Women in Development) focus that has

dominated action-oriented interventions for the past forty-five years—since the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women by the United Nations in 1946—has been followed in the 1990s by GAD (Gender and Development) approaches. Nevertheless, because WID-specific activities are sometimes necessary—for example, when it is felt that only by directly focusing on women would they benefit from the services provided by projects—gender issues in development arenas are sometimes referred as WID/GAD perspectives (ibid.:8-10). WID/GAD has become both a field of inquiry and an area of action-oriented interventions.

Women In Forced Migration (WIFM) discourse dates from the mid-1980s—almost fifteen years after WID was first introduced in academic and development circles. In 1988, the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) brought together "more than 150 participants from forty countries who represented over 100 organizations" (Spencer-Nimmons 1994:319) to discuss refugee women's issues, which marked the beginning of WIFM's institutional recognition.

The terms Women in Forced Migration and Gender and Forced migration appeared in a 1999 volume edited by Doreen Indra and, to my knowledge, represent the most recent formulations on the subject. By the WIFM/GAFM acronyms Indra means to imply an explicit parallel with the WID/GAD frameworks. Indra stresses that "while it is a significant conceptual advance over not considering gender at all, *gender is not usefully equated simply with women*" (1999:4; italics in the original). She further argues that "[b]y inserting disaggregating questions about gender into bureaucratic and social issues discourse such as those concerning forced migration, what were previously 'natural',

taken for granted facts, structures, categories, policies and procedures suddenly appear in a new light" (ibid.:7). Following the example of researchers working in the GAD and GAFM approaches, the data that forms the basis of this dissertation is gender-disaggregated.

Though the general domain of forced migration remains highly fragmented and diverse, it continues to gain strength and influence in research and in the institutional charters of organizations dealing with aid, refugee determination, resettlement, and development. York University's landmark *International Conference on Gender Issues and Refugees: Development Implications* held in Toronto in 1993 exemplifies this rising trend and some of its limitations: while most of the speakers stressed the centrality of gender or its important revisioning potential for a wide range of phenomena relating to forced migration, most presenters also dealt solely with the needs of refugee women (Indra 1999:17).

In spite of these advances there remains a significant gap between WIFM's incorporation into forced migration bureaucratic charters, research, and discourse, and its inclusion into actual forced migration aid and development practice. This also parallels the uneven history of WID, which, while already considered outmoded by many development theorists, continues to be resisted by others who still formulate and implement development programs without any reference to women at all. As a result, most aid and development projects involving forced migration either remain completely gender-neutral—in the negative sense of being 'gender-blind'—or else mention women in policy statements and program guidelines but not in on-the-ground activities (Indra 1999:16-18).

Both feminist anthropology and development research inspired by notions of 'empowerment'—as opposed to 'welfare' approaches (Andersen 1992:173-175)—suggest that a GAFM orientation could lead to a greater awareness among researchers and practitioners of how external, taken-for-granted expectations, concepts, ideologies and world-views are imposed on both women and men in forced migration contexts. A GAFM approach may allow forced migration researchers to be more sensitive to variability as it takes place in different contexts, and move away from persistent essentialist, globalizing, functionalist biases (Indra 1999:18-19).

Although there is a clear linkage between the environment, development and forced migration—often a negative one—environmental concerns are not an intrinsic component of WID/GAD or WIFM/GAFM perspectives. Therefore, by themselves, they do not provide a suitable analytical framework to the study of disasters and environmental crises.

The term "gendered political ecology" was first formulated in 1999 by the MERGE program (Managing Ecosystems and Resources with Gender Emphasis) led by Marianne Schmink. This approach emerged out of a concern about the pervasive lack of gender-awareness in mainstream political ecological analyses. Gendered political ecology, on the other hand, focuses on how gender inequalities relate to environmental problems; it draws attention to the manner in which gender-differentiated local experience develops in the context of global processes of environmental, political, and economic change. Most of the initial work carried out from this perspective entailed analyses of gender relations and their implications for community conservation and natural resource use and management (Schmink 1999).

The concept of vulnerability—a fundamental element to the political ecology of disasters—has been recently incorporated into feminist disaster research, based on the premise that gender discrimination leads to women's condition of vulnerability (Enarson and Morrow 1998). As stated by the authors of *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters*, the leading text on vulnerability (Blaikie *et al.* 1994:48):

> Gender is a pervasive division affecting all societies, and it channels access to social and economic resources away from women and towards men. Women are often denied the vote, the right to inherit land, and generally have less control over income-earning opportunities and cash within their own households. Normally their access to resources is inferior to that of men. Since our argument is that less access to resources, in the absence of other compensations to provide safe conditions, leads to increased vulnerability, we contend that in general women are more vulnerable to hazards.

However, the potential of gendered political ecology as a suitable approach to the study of disasters and post-disaster reconstruction and resettlement has not yet been fully developed.

This dissertation incorporates elements from the WID/GAD and WIFM/GAFM perspectives into a gendered political ecological approach. By examining the relationships between women and men, resource use, and the local and larger socio-political structures as they develop in the little explored reconstruction stages, this research reveals the gender-differentiated capabilities and constraints facing the people of Morolica in their efforts to rebuild their disaster-stricken community.

Structure of the Dissertation

This chapter presents an introduction to the most salient aspects addressed in this dissertation, beginning with a summary of the theoretical framework that guided this research among the survivors of Hurricane Mitch in the community of Morolica. I then

present an overview of the development of political ecology and the vulnerability approach, and discuss the most developed theoretical frameworks for the analysis of relocation. I conclude with the subsequent formulation of gendered political ecology approach to the study of disasters and relocation. I argue that political ecology with its focus on the history of communities within the context of environmental, global and local political, economic and cultural development is well suited to understanding the challenges currently facing Nueva Morolica. Political ecology, however, fails to adequately address the role that gender plays in the production and reproduction of resilience and vulnerability. I have, therefore, chosen to complement political ecology with an approach that incorporates the study of gender into the framework. This chapter ends with a brief description of the contents of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 is an overview of the research design and methodology utilized to collect the data that forms the basis of this dissertation. It begins with a discussion of the ethical dimensions of doing research in disaster situations that emphasizes the need to combine participatory qualitative methods and quantitative techniques and data analysis. The research questions that guided this study are also discussed.

Chapter 3 carries through the gendered political ecology approach to the study of disasters described in Chapter 1. The country of Honduras is described through an analysis of the interactions among the physical and demographic factors, the historical and contemporary political economic factors, and the interrelations between these aspects and the local people, highlighting gender differentials. Special emphasis is placed on those aspects of the social and natural environment of Honduras that have resulted in the heightened conditions of vulnerability of the population. These factors include the highly

dependent economy, the unequal distribution of resources, the widespread food insecurity, and the severe environmental degradation that characterized Honduras prior to the disaster (Stonich 1993; Jansen 1998).

Chapter 4 is an examination of how the historical, geographical, politico-economic and gender factors described in Chapter 3 were played out in the Municipality of Morolica. First, these factors are considered in the Southern region, where Morolica is located. The Southern region, which includes the Departments of Valle and Choluteca, is both one of less developed region in Honduras, and one of the areas most severely impacted by Hurricane Mitch. This chapter concludes with a description of Pre-Mitch Morolica that includes a depiction of the town as well as a discussion of the livelihood strategies and the gender division of labor that characterized the community before the disaster. All household data are gender-disaggregated.

Chapter 5 addresses the impact of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras. It begins by focusing on the event itself, and the devastation left in its wake. The immediate responses of the Honduran government and the international community, which were instrumental in assisting the victims and helping the country start the recovery process, is discussed next. The final section focuses on the town of Morolica and describe its destruction as well as the events that led to it subsequent relocation in March of 2000.

Chapter 6 discusses the impact of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction on the religious beliefs and practices of the population of Morolica. While most of the post-disaster measures implemented in Morolica focused on the physical reconstruction of the community—as will be discussed in Chapter 7—the apparent growth of the Evangelical church after the hurricane pointed to an increased emphasis on ideological and spiritual

notions among the population. This shift to Evangelism was arguably the most noticeable and pervasive form of cultural change experienced by Morolicans after the disaster. This chapter examines the factors that might account for the increasing rates of conversion to Evangelism among Morolican survivors, and discuss the impact that this shift to Evangelism in having on their gender-differentiated survival strategies. A brief overview of the role of the Catholic Church in Honduras, is followed by a discussion of the most relevant aspects of the Evangelical tradition. I then describe Evangelical religious life as it was practiced in Morolica, and discuss the possible reasons for the differential conversion to Evangelism by women and men. Finally, I present some concluding remarks on the links between religious affiliation, resilience and vulnerability.

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the impact of the programs implemented by the many humanitarian groups working in the area. As it was the case with pre-relocation information, all post-relocation data was gender-disaggregated. Gender was central to positioning both women and men *vis-à-vis* the reconstruction authorities working in Morolica, and determined people's access to the assistance provided. The analysis of the changes in the survival strategies of the Morolican population is followed by a discussion of what these changes may mean for the success or failure of Nueva Morolica as a relocated community.

Chapter 8 presents the concluding remarks on the vulnerability and resilience of Morolica in the context of the extreme poverty, social inequality and environmental degradation that characterized most of the country even before Mitch. The chapter begins with a discussion of the many challenges for reconstruction and development facing the country. These challenges stem not only from the conditions of extreme

underdevelopment previously mentioned, but also from a lack of what has been called in Honduras a "*cultura de prevención*", or culture of prevention. A summary of the lessons learned through this study of the community of Morolica is presented next. Emphasis in placed on the role of the gendered political economic factors that acted as one root cause of the disaster; that is, the basis of their vulnerability, as well as the interaction of those factors that might contribute to the increased resilience of the community. This dissertation concludes with some recommendations that can help researchers and policymakers be more aware of the complex interaction of the factors that characterize post-disaster relocation and reconstruction.

Summary

In the last few decades, the field of resettlement studies has started developing a systematic body of theory and knowledge that is relevant to disaster management and research. The study of disasters, however, has yet to fulfill its full potential for contributing to the growing body of theory on resettlement, even though disasters account for a significant proportion of resettlement projects (Oliver-Smith 1991:14). The most developed approaches to the study of resettlement have been proposed by Scudder and Colson (1982), De Wet (1988), Coburn *et al.*, Oliver-Smith (1991), and Cernea (1997).

Although the anthropological study of disasters is a relatively recent field, anthropology has already made important contributions to the study of disasters and resettlement processes. Four main approaches to the anthropological study of disasters can be identified: historical and archaeological perspectives; socio-cultural and behavioral approaches; applied anthropology and political ecology (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 1999).

This chapter presented an overview of the different anthropological approaches to the study of disasters and resettlement, emphasizing the perspective that guided this study of post-disaster relocation in the community of Morolica. This framework is known as gendered political ecology. Gender political ecology, a recent elaboration on mainstream political ecological approaches, is sensitive to site-specific conditions while also acknowledging that forces beyond the particular site influence local outcomes, paying attention to gender differentials. I argue that gendered political ecology is a suitable approach to the study of post-disaster recovery efforts in Honduras in general, and the resettlement of Morolica in particular.

The future of Honduras, or that of the women and men in disaster-stricken communities such as Morolica, cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty without conducting additional long-term studies. Nonetheless, the evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that without a change in the underlying political ecology of the Southern region, and of Honduras as a nation, the natural resource base and the quality of life of a significant portion of the population will continue to deteriorate.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The methods chosen to explore the issues addressed in this dissertation reflect the assumption that valid approaches to research in situations of crisis and change must begin with the perceptions and interests of all people involved, both local people and outside planners. Oliver-Smith (1992) has argued that, although much of what transpires in crisis situations—number of dead, of wounded, of survivors, aid distributed—is amenable to quantitative analytical techniques, statistics can only tell a part of the story. Communicating the sense of event, of place, of tragedy, of hope, and the vivid experiences of life in a disaster zone demands a personal approach, which John Honingmann (1976) has called "the core methodology of the discipline" (as cited in Oliver-Smith 1992:27). Participatory methods that facilitate dialogue and encourage participants to contribute to the production of information better address the aspirations and concerns of people in the midst of crises and change. Consequently, this study of post-disaster recovery efforts in Morolica emphasized the use of qualitative and participatory research methods, complemented with quantitative methods and data analysis.

Ethical Dimensions of Disaster Research

As noted by Hewitt (1997:191) "[p]ractices not informed by principle are meaningless; principles without action, worthless". In her study (1958) *The Human Condition,* Hannah Arendt argued that communication and the "irreducible links between

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speech and action" are the defining characteristic of collective human life (as cited in

Hewitt 1997:193). Communication is a question of priorities and action, not merely

knowledge and technique. Powerlessness is the result of people's inability to share and

carry out their own thoughts. Empowerment, on the other hand, is defined as people

ability "to organize and influence change on the basis on their access to knowledge, to

political processes and to financial, social, and natural resources" (Slocum *et al.* 1995:4).

Empowerment is thus realized through dialogue and shared action, which allows people

to order, direct, and make sense of their own existence (Hewitt 1997:193).

This link between meaningful human existence and the need for communication

is particularly relevant for the study of disasters, as underscored by "the will to bear

witness" expressed by many victims under very diverse circumstances. Indeed, Des Pres

(1976) has characterized this impulse to bear witness as a "typical and in some sense

necessary response to extremity" and as "one of the primary aspects of the survival

experience" (ibid.:33). Through their role as witnesses, survivors overcome their position

as passive victims and take on the active role of witnesses of the tragedy endured by

themselves and others. It is important to stress that this communication needs to be

voluntary. People's right to protect themselves against unwanted intrusions in matters

affecting their well-being and safety should always be respected. "Existence in extremity

is not an easy subject. It is hard to approach and harder still to understand" (Des Pres

1976:6). Efforts to keep notes and journals, to record data as faithfully as possible, and to

adhere to a scientific role need to be reconciled with the human impulse to empathize and

share with people the difficulties they are experiencing. While I believe this to always be

the case, it is perhaps even more critical in disaster situations than in other contexts in

which an anthropologist might find herself. Accordingly, the data that forms the basis of this dissertation was gathered through a combination of participatory qualitative methods complemented with quantitative techniques and data analysis.

"Humanitarian concern and philanthropic gestures, expressions of deep concern and unselfish helping, are an integral part of responses to disaster" (Hewitt 1997:191). Many of those involved in practical, organized response to hazards and disasters define their work in terms of morality and justice. It is widely agreed that the relief of suffering should not be based on the arbitrary preferences of the individuals and organizations providing assistance, or be contingent with who is a victim (ibid.). However, even this basic humanitarian premise is fraught with ambivalence. The individuals and groups whose *status quo ante* was favorable are likely to expect its reestablishment. Others may hope that the existing social inequalities, frequently revealed by disasters and crises, will be addressed by the reconstruction efforts. Contention over priorities and objectives, persistence and change often characterizes disaster situations. Reconstruction schemes that uphold preexisting patterns of social inequality, for instance, are held responsible for further discrimination and dislocation (Oliver-Smith 1992). While there is no easy answer to the practical and ethical issues posed by research in disaster situations, it is clear that anthropologists involved in this type of research can make important contributions by drawing attention to these inequalities, and by analyzing the socially-differentiated impact of both disasters and subsequent reconstruction efforts. In doing so, anthropologists can empower the vulnerable so that they can demand or develop safer, more equitable living conditions for themselves.

Research Questions

This study responds to the need for a greater understanding of the little explored reconstruction stages that follow the immediate emergency phase after a disaster. Specifically, this work analyzes the impact of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction efforts on the survival strategies adopted by the members of the community of Morolica.

The following questions guided this research:

- What were the livelihood strategies of the members of the community, both individually and as household members, before the hurricane? Did they change after the disaster? How?

- What are the extent and characteristics of the post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction interventions being implemented?

- What are the differential constraints and opportunities faced by women and men during these processes? Are gender roles changing? How?

- What is the impact of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction of the religious beliefs and practices of the Morolican population? What factors account for the increasing rates of conversion to Evangelism among survivors? What are the implications of this shift to Evangelism for the gender-differentiated survival strategies adopted by the population?

- How do the processes of resettlement and reconstruction address the linkage between unequal distribution of resources, environmental degradation, local livelihood strategies, and gender-differentiated vulnerability and resilience?

Research Design and Methodology

A key component of this dissertation is the analysis of the role of gender as a key variable that determines people's vulnerability or resilience to disasters, the post-disaster relocation responses they engage in, and their ability to overcome the problems caused by displacement. By emphasizing gender differentials, this dissertation draws attention to "the socially defined characteristics of men and women in particular situations in terms of the work they [do] and the results of this work" (Spring 1995:6). Gender is a fundamental

organizing principle of everyday life, conceptualized as a key relational dimension of human activity and thought. Informed by cultural and individual notions of women and men, gender has implications for the social, cultural and religious positioning of individuals and the ways in which they experience their lives (Indra 1999:2).

This research shows that gender was central to positioning both women and men *vis-à-vis* the civilian and religious reconstruction authorities working in Morolica, and influenced people's access to the assistance provided. Gender, as it intersected with age and class, also conditioned the responsibilities and activities carried out by women and men, and shaped the opportunities and constraints they faced in securing viable livelihoods and rebuilding their community. Vulnerability and resilience in Morolica were clearly gender-differentiated.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, was not a variable in Morolica since the entire community was ethnically homogenous. Hondurans identify four different ethnic groups in their country: *negros* (black, referring to the Garifuna population of the Atlantic coast); *Miskitos* (referring to the inhabitants of an area known as La Mosquitia which includes the department of Gracias a Dios); *Indios* (Indian; the descendants of the pre-Hispanic inhabitants of Honduras); and *Hondureños* (Honduran; mainly mestizos). When asked about their ethnic group or "raza", as they call it, all Morolicans identify themselves as *Hondureños*.

Vulnerability, as defined by Blaikie *et al.* (1994:9), refers to "the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard". The concept of vulnerability has been developed in the last decade as an alternative, or a complement, to the dominant "hazards paradigm"

which focuses on the hazards themselves, and frequently encourages top-down planning and standardized, technocratic prediction and mitigation measures (Blaikie *et al.* 1994:218).

Conversely, resilience is defined as a measure of an individual's or group's ability to recover from acute shocks—major sudden perturbations, such as natural disasters— and chronic stresses—processes that result in long-term gradual declines in resource availability, such as unmitigated structural adjustment measures, excessive population growth, or environmental decline (Singh 1996). The new opportunities presented by reconstruction circumstances can potentially result in conditions of increased resilience, as long as the measures taken to recover from the acute shocks also address the causes that produce the chronic stresses. In the specific case of Honduras, resilience can only be promoted if the task of rebuilding the country is accompanied by measures to address the highly vulnerable economy, unequal distribution of resources, widespread food insecurity and severe environmental degradation that characterized the country prior to the disaster (Stonich 1993; Jansen 1998).

This research was carried out between July of 1999 and July of 2000. The first stage of the research was spent in the shantytown of makeshift shacks where Morolican survivors lived for over a year after the disaster. The second stage of the study took place in the relocated community, known as Nueva Morolica, where the population moved in March 2000. Additional socioeconomic, historical and demographic information, as well as data on the national and foreign assistance organizations involved in the reconstruction efforts, was also gathered in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro, and other larger cities in Honduras.

The main unit of analysis of this study was the individual women and men of Morolica. Data on households was gender-disaggregated.

I had a focus group discussion, also known as group interview, almost every week. Focus groups, as defined by Slocum *et al.*, are "fairly small discussion groups (10 to 15 people) led by a researcher or facilitator [that] enable outsiders to understand and describe better the range of perspectives in a community through small group discussions" (1995:95).

The focus group discussions I carried out in Morolica usually lasted a couple of hours. I would first request permission from the mayor who would suggest a time that would not interfere with the many other community meetings held in Morolica. Either the mayor or myself would then notify a member of the Municipal government who, bullhorn in hand, would walk around the shantytown announcing the meeting. The number of participants varied from meeting to meeting, usually ranging from ten to twenty. Most of them were women who came when available and left the discussion when needing to attend to their other responsibilities, sometimes rejoining the group afterwards. I never had a problem with lack of attendance or participation. Focus groups or "*charlas*" as they called them, became very popular as one of the few available sources of entertainment, especially for women.

Although I prepared the question(s) I wanted to ask ahead of time and presented the topic at the beginning of the meeting, the discussions tended to be fairly unstructured. The main difficulty was to keep the focus group focused on any particular topic, but they were very useful in terms of observing group interaction and getting people to open up and feel comfortable talking with me.

Map drawing exercises were carried out as group activities, usually during focus group meetings. I would bring large sheets of paper and colored markers and distribute them among the attendants who either worked on their own maps individually or, more frequently, would chose someone to draw one map for the entire group while others made suggestions. I took pictures of these maps, but the maps themselves were left with the community. Community resource mapping allowed me to see what kind of resources were available and which were emphasized and valued by different kinds of people. A theme that frequently emerged in mapping exercises was Morolicans' general satisfaction with the site selected for the construction of the new town as well as with the layout of the settlement. On the other hand, no reference was ever made to the location of the new community in relation with potential risk of damage from landslides, floods or other hazards. Both, Morolicans' apparent lack of interest in disaster preparedness measures, and their general satisfaction with the relocated community, were attitudes consistently expressed by most respondents during informal conversations and more formal interviews.

Similarly to mapping exercises, calendar-drawing exercises took place during group meetings and involved the distribution of large sheets of paper and colored markers among participants. Seasonal activities calendars "help to identify livelihood tasks and to categorize responsibilities by season, gender, age and intensity of activity" (Slocum *et al.* 1995:181) throughout the year. Since the destruction provoked by Hurricane Mitch had so dramatically disrupted the usual range and schedule of activities of the population, the information presented in these calendars was necessarily recall data that may or may not reflect the future distribution of livelihood tasks in Morolica. Nevertheless, the seasonal

activities calendars were useful to clarify how the roles and responsibilities of women and men had been distributed before the disaster. This information complemented the data I gathered through other methods such as interviews and questionnaires, and helped to illustrate some of the gender factors that led to the construction of gendered-differentiated vulnerability and resilience.

The Gender Analysis Activity Profile is a research method that provides detailed information about who is responsible for what activities in the community and why. Focus groups or community-wide discussions are frequently used to gather the data. The gender analysis framework developed by Overholt *et al.* (1985) and refined by Rao *et al.* (1991), refers to a research framework for integrating gender issues into program analysis. It is intended to clarify the gender division of labor, resource and control, and the constraints and benefits experienced by women and men. The "vulnerability approach" (Blaikie *et al.* 1994), discussed in the previous chapter, emphasizes that those who are socially disadvantaged in some way can be expected to be more vulnerable in a disaster situation. Carrying out a gender-sensitive analysis is congruent with this approach because, since women in patriarchal societies like Honduras are socially, economically and politically disadvantaged in general, it is to be expected that this disadvantage would translate into heightened conditions of vulnerability.

I also carried out an institutional Stakeholder Analysis (regarding the agencies involved in relocation and reconstruction) and a community Stakeholder Analysis, involving community groups. The main objective was to identify potential problems and sources of conflict among the participants. Stakeholders are groups—not necessarily organized—that share common objectives and preferences regarding the alternatives

under consideration. Stakeholder analysis (SA) is a useful approach to understand situations in which different actors are likely to perceive different problems and, therefore, seek different solutions and use different criteria for assessing the desirability of a given intervention (Grimble and Chan 1995:113-115).

Finally, I administered 101 questionnaires (see Appendices A and B for Spanish and English versions of the questionnaire). A statistical software package (SPSS 10.0) was used to analyze questionnaire data.

The mayor of Morolica provided me with an alphabetical roster of all the inhabitants of the community (312 families with a total of 1,615 people at the time this research was carried out). This roster had been compiled by members of the municipal council at the request of the mayor with the purpose of determining how many houses would have to be built in Nueva Morolica.

For sampling purposes, I assigned a number to each of the families listed in this roster and selected every third number resulting in a random sample of 101 families (I interviewed 52 women and 49 men), of a total of 312 Morolican families. Each questionnaire was comprised of 35 questions regarding productive, reproductive and community activities before and after Mitch, questions about attitudes towards relocation, and questions about prioritization of needs. Although I had made a preliminary list of the key questions I wanted to ask, early versions of the questionnaire underwent substantial modifications in the field. Several community members—mainly school teachers and members of the Municipality—were kind enough to review the questionnaire and offer useful suggestions, both regarding the relevance of the questions as well as the language used.

Summary

This chapter begins with a discussion of the ethical dimensions involved in the study of populations in the midst of catastrophic change. Attention is drawn to the links between voluntary communication, participation and empowerment, and to the assumption that valid approaches to research in disaster situations must incorporate the perceptions and interests of all people involved, both local people and outside planners. The research questions that guided this research, as well as the research design and methodology used to collect the data that forms the basis of this dissertation reflect these concerns. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used; in all cases, respondents' participation was encouraged.

In view of predictions of increased hurricane activity in the Caribbean basin in the next decades, and the conditions of vulnerability that affect much of the population, research on post-disaster recovery efforts in Honduras such as the present study can be an important step towards increasing the resilience of the region. Interactive, participatory methods facilitate dialogue among all groups and better address the aspirations and concerns of people in the midst of crises and change. The lessons learned through this type of research can also contribute to the design and implementation of more effective reconstruction programs and vulnerability reduction measures in this and similar situations.

CHAPTER 3
HONDURAS: THE ROOT CAUSES OF DISASTER

This chapter carries through the gendered political ecology approach to the study of disasters and relocation described in Chapter 2, and reasserts the significance of the human factor in disaster events. Gendered political ecology is based on the premise that current and historical social, political, and economic considerations mediate the dynamic interactions between women and men and their natural and socially constructed environments. Guided by this perspective, I discuss the historical and current environmental and socio-political dimensions that frame the conditions of vulnerability of much of the Honduran population. An analysis of the interrelations between these aspects and the local people provides a better understanding of the root causes of the disaster. Special emphasis is placed on those aspects of the social and natural environment of Honduras that have resulted in the heightened conditions of vulnerability of the population. Gender factors that might result in gender-differentiated conditions of vulnerability and resilience are also examined.

Physical and Demographic Factors

The Republic of Honduras is the second largest country in Central America, after Nicaragua, and covers 112,491 square kilometers (Figure 3-1). Approximately two-thirds of Honduras are covered by rugged mountains. These cordilleras do not fall in neat parallel chains, but present a jumble of small mountain ranges that zigzag across the country in all different directions. These mountains have played an important role in

Honduran history, isolating the country from its neighbors and limiting agricultural development (Humphrey 1997:2). The major river systems are the Coco River, also known as Segovia (550 km), the Patuca River (500 km), the Ulúa River (200 km), the Chamalecón River (200 km), the Aguán River (225 km), the Sico River, also known as Negro (215 km), the Choluteca River, on whose banks used to be located Morolica (250 km), the Guascorán River (115 km) and the Nacaome River (90 km) (Humphrey 1998:8). Hydrological features played an important role in the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch. When the hurricane hit Honduras between October 21 and November 1, intense rains caused major flooding in lowland areas and river basins. In the north, the Ulúa River was at one point 15 kilometers wide; in the south, the Choluteca River permanently changed course, taking an old channel across its delta into the Pacific Ocean. In fact, the course of several rivers was so significantly changed by the massive flooding that the Honduran government had to use satellite imagery to re-map them. The scale of the destruction, however, was directly related to human negligence. Many towns had no storm drains and communities had been built on flood plains and unstable hill slopes. The Concepción Dam on the Choluteca River was already full before the rains started. Its operators feared that it would break and, late at night on October 30, made a "high-flow release of 760 cubic meters a second" (Pearce 1999:1) that engulfed several hamlets.

A similar situation was provoked by the failure of the Laguna del Pescado Dam. This natural reservoir on a tributary of the Choluteca River had formed some years before after a landslip blocked the river. The authorities never got around to removing the block. According to reports by the USGS "a large proportion of the natural dam failed, sending

a flood wave down the channel" (ibid.:2) that caused the level of the river to quickly rise by several meters flooding much of central Tegucigalpa.

Figure 3-1. Honduras and Central America. Source: www.crstone.org/hondmap.htm

Most of Honduras experiences a fairly well defined dry and wet seasons. From November to April northerly winds bring the dry season—known as *verano,* summer—during which there is little or no rainfall and humidity levels are at their lowest. Temperature is at its highest in April and May. The rainy season—called *invierno,* winter—normally begins in May or June and continues to November or December. This wet period is often broken in August and September by a three-to six-week dry spell

called *la canicula* or sometimes *el veranillo de San Juan* (Humphrey 1997:7). There is evidence that average annual precipitation levels have been declining since the 1960s (Boyer 1982: 54-56; cited in Stonich 1993:36).

Heavy storms and hurricanes are relatively common during the rainy season. Even when the hurricanes themselves do not reach the mainland, they bring heavy rains that result in floods that destroy homes, damage agriculture, and lead to increased cases of diseases such as cholera (Humphrey 1998:7). During the first months of the rainy season, clouds gather in the afternoon leading to brief showers that pass by the evening. The later months, particularly October and November, bring much heavier rains, due to tropical storms developing in the Caribbean. Full-blown hurricanes, like Hurricane Mitch, strike Honduras every decade or so, and have killed thousands of people and left even more homeless. Hurricane Fifi killed an estimated 10,000 Hondurans in 1974 (Humphrey 1998:7). Four hundred people died in floods in November 1993. In November 1996, Tropical Storm Marco struck the north Coast destroying 4,000 homes (Keller *et al.* 1997:317).

Another serious problem is the extremely high rate of deforestation, with soils being lost at the rate of 10,000 hectares per year. At this rate, the country could become completely deforested within 20 years (Keller *et al.* 1997:316). Similarly, the destruction of coastal resources including fisheries, and the deterioration of the watersheds have also reached acute levels in many areas. Unsustainable agricultural activities, overgrazing, deforestation, indiscriminate fuel wood collection and uncontrolled use of pesticides are some of the practices resulting in the ecological crisis that plagues Honduras (USAID 1990:3; WRI 1992:286). Evidence suggests that there is a link between deforestation and

soil erosion, and increasing intensity or frequency of hazards in the long run by, for instance, increasing the chances of landslides and generating local flooding through stream damming (Blaikie *et al*.1994: 135). The connection between unsustainable natural resource use practices and heightened conditions of vulnerability is another example of the premise that disasters are fundamentally social in nature.

Environmental degradation in Honduras has been compounded by the alarming rate of population growth. Table 3-1 shows population figures for the 18 Departments and 291 Municipalities in which Honduras is divided administratively. The town of Morolica, is the capital of the municipality of the same name in the southern department of Choluteca (Sánchez 1998).

Table 3-1. Departments, Municipalities, Hamlets and Population in Honduras.

Department	Municipalities	Hamlets	Population		
			1988	1993	2000
Atlántida	8	231	238,741	276,198	338,073
Colón	10	136	149,677	175,478	221,809
Comayagua	21	283	243,163	286,804	356,487
Copán	23	335	219,455	250,696	304,570
Cortés	12	286	662,772	752,781	905,705
Choluteca	16	194	295,484	335,613	403,792
El Paraíso	19	233	254,295	291,130	354,788
Francisco Morazán	28	276	828,274	933,193	1,109,162
Gracias a Dios	2	66	34,970	41,323	52,897

Table 3-1. continued.

Department	Municipalities	Hamlets	Population 1988	1993	2000
Intibucá	16	126	124,681	143,196	175,317
Islas de la Bahía	4	23	22,062	26,589	31,311
La Paz	19	114	105,927	123,047	152,021
Lempira	27	299	177,055	202,679	246,893
Ocotepeque	16	125	74,276	85,149	103,836
Olancho	23	288	283,852	333,083	421,342
Santa Bárbara	27	365	278,868	317,631	381,807
Valle	9	86	119,965	136,970	163,784
Yoro	11	263	333,508	383,626	471,339
Honduras	291	3729	4,447,025	5,095,187	6,194,933

Source: CIAT-Laderas

In the second half of the twentieth century Honduras underwent explosive population growth. In the 1910 census, the annual rate of population growth barely exceeded 1.5 percent. By 1950 it had reached 3 percent. From 1960 to 1990, the population growth rate climbed to 3.3 percent (Merrill 1993). The country's high birth rate has led Honduras's population to double about every twenty-five years. The 1950 census counted 1,368,605 inhabitants, almost twice as many as the 1926 census recorded. By 1974 the population had almost doubled once again. As of July 1992, the population was estimated to be 5,092,776. Although no new official figures were available at the completion of this research, a study carried out in 1998 estimated that the total population for the year 2000 would have reached over 6 million people (CIAT-Laderas 1998).

Several factors have contributed to the rapid population rise. Honduras has consistently maintained high birth rates during the twentieth century. The crude birth rate (CBR—the annual number of births per 1,000 inhabitants) from the beginning to the mid-point of the century fluctuated between 41.7 and 44.5 births per 1,000 inhabitants. From around 1950 to 1975, Honduras had the highest CBR in Latin America. Since the mid-1970s, the CBR has steadied somewhat. In 1990 the CBR stood at 39 births per 1,000 inhabitants (Merrill 1993).

The total fertility rate (TFR—the average number of children a woman would bear in her lifetime) had dropped to 7.5 children per woman by the early 1970s. Since the 1970s the TFR in Honduras has declined. In the 1990s it went down to 5.2. The TFR, however, varies considerably according to a woman's residence in rural or urban areas and according to income level. Rural women had an average of 8.7 children while urban women had 5.3 children. The TFR for all upper- and middle-income women both rural and urban was 5.8, while among lower income women it was approximately 8.0 (Merrill 1993). According to a report by the World Bank, almost 50 percent of the population is less than 15 years old—that is, just entering into childbearing years. Predictions indicate that the country's population will continue to grow significantly into the twenty first century (World Bank 1992).

A clear link can be established between population growth, declining human health, environmental degradation, and increased vulnerability in Honduras. In urban areas, deteriorating living conditions in ever-growing squatter settlements and shantytown areas with inadequate sanitation facilities have resulted in high rates of diarrheal and parasitic diseases, a leading cause of mortality and morbidity in the country

(Jacobson 1992). Since land suitable for construction purposes is scarce and expensive, many of these shantytowns have been built on highly unstable hill slopes prone to landslides and mudslides during the rainy season. In effect, the crowded squatter settlements built on the steep hillsides that surround the center of Tegucigalpa were among the neighborhoods most severely impacted by Hurricane Mitch. In rural areas, diminished access to safe water supply, inadequate excreta disposal facilities, lack of access to health services and handling and use of pesticides are putting rural populations at increasing risk (WHO 1990). Similarly, a study by the World Bank shows that per capita food production declined an average of 15 percent among all countries in Central America between 1980 and 1990 (World Bank 1992). Food insecurity and malnutrition can be linked to overemphasis on export agriculture, ineffective support for food-crop agriculture, and poorly developed mechanisms for distributing food to those most in need (Stonich 1993:6). These factors will be discussed in the following section. An analysis of the historical and politico-economic dimensions that led to the current situation in Honduras contributes to a better understanding of the heightened conditions of vulnerability in the region.

Politico-Economic Factors

Williams (1986, 1991) has argued that the recent economic and political crisis in Central America can be traced to earlier processes that evolved from basic structural inequalities, the encroachment upon traditional peasant lands, and the transformation of agricultural labor relations resulting from an overemphasis on export crops. Liberal economic initiatives implemented by many Central American governments during the nineteenth century to expand the production of export crops, particularly coffee, resulted

in the privatization of many communally owned and managed lands. These and other actions to promote exports led to the concentration of property in the hands of a small minority, and to the spreading marginalization and impoverishment of the increasingly vulnerable rural population. For many families, diminished access to land led to greater dependence on wages earned as seasonal laborers on large farms (Williams 1986, 1991).

Honduras did not become articulated with the world economic system until the end of the 19th century as a result of the externally financed establishment of the banana industry and the reintroduction of mining. Through its involvement with the mining and banana industries beginning in the 1880s, the Honduran Government initiated its prevailing role as an ally of foreign—especially US—corporations (White 1977:97-98). Before 1950, Honduras lacked a central bank, and the primary medium of exchange was US currency. Shortly after President Gálvez' inauguration, which took place in 1949, he received a mission from the newly established IMF which had chosen to work in Honduras precisely because of the chaos of its financial system. With their help, Gálvez' administration created the Central Bank and the National Development Bank in 1950; the former having control over monetary matters, the latter providing credit for specific development projects (White 1977:95). Shortly after, Honduras became a target for a growing network of agencies concerned with supporting expanded government activities, services, and development including USAID and the UN agencies, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), international labor federations, and overseas aid funds of various religious organizations (ibid.:94-100).

The presence of small peasant farmers and their families on rented, national or *ejidal*—community managed—land, that could potentially be put into commercial

production, impeded large-scale capitalist expansion. However, beginning in the 1950s, large landowners used a variety of methods to have them evicted. The forced evictions, exorbitant rental fees, and declines in available national and *ejido* land contributed to the decreases in the amount of land to which small farmers had access. These factors, along with the increasing allocation of land from food crop production to export crop production and the significant increases in regional production, concentrated landholdings in the hands of a few wealthy landowners and excluded small holders more then ever before (White 1977). Faced with ever-dwindling access to agricultural land and lacking other economic opportunities small farmers were forced to resort to deforesting hillsides to clear land in their desperate efforts to feed their families, further exacerbating the problems of ecological degradation and environmental vulnerability.

With international assistance, the Honduran government functioned as an agent of development by improving access to credit, establishing markets, and constructing the requisite regional infrastructure. A domestic, capitalist agricultural sector emerged in the 1950s, and by the mid-1970s, large foreign agricultural enterprises began investing in the area, competing with regional capitalists for land and labor. From mid-century to the present, diversification and growth of agricultural production for export characterized the Honduran economy, particularly in the southern region where Morolica is located. Cotton, then sugar and livestock, were the primary commodities involved in the transformation of the south. In the mid-1970s, these products were supplemented by sesame and melons and later by a wider variety of so-called "nontraditional" exports, especially cultivated shrimp. For the Honduran government, mired in persistent fiscal crisis and tied to foreign interests, struggling with the repayment of mounting external

debt has taken priority over conserving natural resources. Export commodities such as cotton, cattle, melons, and shrimp, attract international assistance and investment, and increase foreign exchange earnings—whatever their social and environmental costs (Stonich 1993:64).

Development schemes aimed at alleviating Central America's social and economic problems historically have stressed intensified exploitation of the region's natural resources through increased exports of agricultural commodities and forest products, enhanced agricultural productivity and expanded industrial fisheries. Since the second half of the twentieth century, the Honduran government contributed to the stagnation of basic grains—corn, beans, sorghum, rice—by placing price ceilings on basic staples as a way of maintaining cheap food for the growing urban population (Stonich 1993). Export growth through agricultural diversification remained the cornerstone of development strategies in Central America throughout the post-World War II period. Despite the critical need for improved access to institutional credit for small-holder farmers, a survey by the European Commission estimated that less than 10 percent of basic grain farmers received institutional credit (USAID 1990:13). The combination of price ceilings and limited credit contributed to the stagnation of small farm food production, the major supplier for the national market further exacerbating the problems faced by small farmers.

During the 1970s, due to the declines in international commodity prices, soaring costs of oil and technological inputs such as pesticides, the collapse of regional markets, and the growing debt burden, the region sunk into severe economic crisis distinguished by a decline in economic growth and by worsening inequalities (ECLAC 1986).

Recent government efforts to further diversify and expand agriculture for export in order to increase foreign exchange are more comprehensible in light of Honduras' deteriorating economic conditions during the 1980s. Honduras, already one of the poorest countries in Central America, underwent a prolonged recession, followed by virtual economic stagnation, since the onset of the debt crisis in the early 80s (Green 1995:229). Evidence of the international economic crisis emerged in Honduras in 1981, and intensified throughout the decade. The balance of payments and the national treasury suffered serious imbalances. There were significant constraints in supplying imported goods, and private investment dropped as a result of the region's political and social problems as well as the disturbances in the exchange and monetary systems. This situation was aggravated by the economy's vulnerability to external fluctuations affecting the demand and price of its traditional export products such as bananas and coffee (Stonich 1992).

Enormous amounts of foreign assistance attempted to ameliorate the deteriorating social, economic, and ecological conditions in all of Honduras, including the southern region (CONAA 1991:46-59). Between 1980 and 1989, the real growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 2.3 percent per year, below the population growth rate of 2.9 percent, which led to concomitant drops in wages and in living conditions. Rural households were disproportionately affected due in part to the substantial decline in agricultural prices relative to nonagricultural prices, which also discouraged additional investment in agriculture. By the late 1989, the major financial lending institutions—The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank—placed Honduras on the list of countries that were ineligible for new loans

because of overdue payments on earlier credits. The impact of the economic crisis was particularly severe on the poor (Stonich 1993:65).

Honduras played a marginal role in US foreign policy until after the Sandinista revolution in 1979 when its strategic position was reevaluated (Stonich 1993:2). "[B]olstered by significant urban labor, middle class, and student support, peasant uprisings and resistance accelerated, culminating in revolution in Nicaragua, ongoing civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala, and the militarization of Honduras" (Stonich 1992:9).

Unlike neighboring El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, which have been engulfed by violent confrontations, Honduras has remained relatively free of armed conflict, apart from minor, occasional bursts of guerrilla activity over the years. Political analysts have argued that Honduras was spared the armed revolts that have devastated its neighbors because it was less socially stratified, and because the poor had a stake in the system. Or, as Benjamin (1989:xv) has put it, "[i]f people are poor but so are all their neighbors, then poverty is more likely to be attributed to the design of God than the hand of man".

In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, extremes of poverty co-exist with extremes of wealth. In Honduras, on the other hand, foreign companies own the majority of the nation's wealth. Although equal distribution of wealth and resources is far from being a prominent feature of Honduran society, historically "[t]he inequalities in Honduras have been less glaring than those in neighboring countries" (Benjamin 1989:xvi).

All countries of the isthmus have been under the direct influence of the US. However, none has been more completely controlled by their economic, political, and military relations with the US than has Honduras. From the beginning of last century, Honduras's principal economic activities have been dominated, directly or indirectly, by US companies. During World War II, motivated by security considerations, the US government began to provide aid to Honduras in the form of road building and health assistance, as well as in military training (White 1977:97-98). In the immediate post-World War II period, other powerful international actors, including the World Bank, the IMF, and the IDB, became vital participants by providing credit, establishing markets and financing infrastructural works. These interventions fundamentally altered the ways in which international agricultural capitalism and the state impacted the environment and the people of Honduras (Stonich 1993:63), ultimately promoting the unsustainable exploitation of the resources in the name of economic growth and modernization. According to conservative estimates, in the mid-1980s, 60 percent of the Honduran economy was controlled by US companies. The US is the principal buyer of Honduran exports, the main supplier of Honduran imports, and the biggest creditor for Honduran external debt (Paz 1986).

In the 1980s Honduras, once "the sleepy backwater of Central America", suddenly became the hub of US policy in the region (Benjamin 1989:xviii). With Ronald Reagan's ascendance to the presidency of the US in January 1981, US military involvement in Central America increased dramatically. The US funneled huge sums of money and thousands of US troops into Honduras as it conducted provocative maneuvers clearly designed to threaten Nicaragua. Nicaraguan refugee camps in Honduras were used

as bases for a US sponsored, undeclared, covert war against the Nicaraguan government, which became known as the Contra War. At the same time the US was training the Salvadoran military at Salvadoran refugee camps inside Honduras, near the border with El Salvador (Keller *et al*. 1997:314-5). In 1988 around 12,000 members of the Nicaraguan Resistance Forces (known as the Contras, short for *contrarevolucionarios*— counter-revolutionaries in Spanish) operated from Honduras. In return for allowing the US to station Contra rebels on its border with Nicaragua, Washington rewarded the Honduran government with large sums of economic assistance, partially allowing it to mitigate the impact of IMF's austerity policies (Green 1995:229). The US-sponsored military buildup in Honduras was so massive that even CIA operatives and US embassy officials began to cynically refer to the country as "USS Honduras", or the "Pentagon Republic" (Benjamin 1989:xix).

In response to deteriorating social and economic conditions, US policy makers in the early 1980s once again proposed economic reforms in order to defuse political crisis in the region. The goal of the 1984 "Caribbean Basin Initiative" was to establish regional stability through economic growth stimulated by domestic and foreign investment. Agricultural diversification through the promotion of a new set of non-traditional exports was the foundation of this scheme (USAID 1991). The United States pressured the Honduran military to hold elections in 1981, after 18 years of military rule. The electoral process, however, resulted in the strengthening of the Honduran military, and the consequent weakening of the civilian power. In a meeting between both major candidates and the main Honduran military authorities celebrated before the elections, it was agreed that the armed forces would have full control over security issues, including policies

toward El Salvador and Nicaragua, as well as veto power over all cabinet appointments. "The electoral process, rather than curbing the power of the military, allowed the military to act with greater impunity now that it was covered by the façade of a civilian government" (Benjamin 1989:xix).

In the 1980s the only flourishing sector of the Honduran economy was the military. As the politicians and military authorities were getting richer off US economic assistance, the bulk of the population was disastrously impacted by the severe economic crisis that characterized the decade (Benjamin 1989:xxi). A US government study published in 1986 reported that over one million dollars of Congressional funds designated to aid the Contras between November 1985 and January 1986 were instead diverted to the Honduran military (General Accounting Office Report 1986). Finally, in November 1988, the Honduran government refused to sign a new military agreement with the US, and President Azcona said the Contras would have to leave Honduras. With the election of Violeta Chamorro as president of Nicaragua in 1990, the Contra War ended, and the Contras were finally out of Honduras (Keller *et al.* 1997:315).

Since even before the end of the Contra War pressure for a full structural adjustment program began to grow. In Honduras, as US aid began to tail off in the late 80s, the government was forced to turn to the IMF and The World Bank for economic assistance. The Bank approved a US $50 million Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL) in 1988, but then suspended it when Honduras failed to reach an agreement with the IMF the following year. USAID also froze its program (Green 1995:229).

Structural adjustment "refers to the process by which many developing nations are reshaping their economies to be more free market oriented" (Sparr 1994:1). More

specifically, structural adjustment is based on the assumption that an economy will be most efficient and productive if market forces operate, and products and services are not protected, regulated or subsidized by the government. Under this approach governments are encouraged to abandon the import-substitution models that characterize state interventionism and move towards *laissez-faire* capitalism (ibid.:2). Several studies have documented the human and environmental costs of structural adjustment, emphasizing the disproportionate impact that the crises and the adjustment measures have had on women (Spring 1989; Sparr 1994; Green 1995).

The economic crisis of the 1980s during which Central American governments struggled with the burden of servicing external debts in a context of deteriorating terms of trade extended into the 1990s. In 1989 a new government took office in Honduras, led by the neo-liberal Rafael Callejas. He further promoted the liberalization of trade, devalued the Lempira—the national currency—began a privatization program, and cleared the backlog of debt arrears. His government signed a second Structural Adjustment Loan with the World Bank, followed in 1992 by a three-year loan from the IMF (Green 1995:229). The severe economic adjustment programs implemented in response to pressure from international donor institutions resulted in declines in real income and social services especially among the most vulnerable segments of society—the rural and urban poor (Stonich 1993:3).

Social expenditure in all areas was curtailed at the same time that the falling world market prices of bananas, coffee, sugar, and cotton—the main Honduran commodities—resulted in reduced export earnings. The conditions of relative equality— by Central American standards—that had once set Honduras apart from its neighbors

quickly vanished (Benjamin 1989:xxi). The economic polarization between the politicians and military authorities on the one hand, and the bulk of the population on the other, that was exacerbated during the 1980s remains today a defining characteristic of Honduran society.

Honduras confronted the 1990s under extremely difficult circumstances. The country was undergoing the implementation of a stern structural adjustment program. Economic stagnation resulted in Honduras having the fourth lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Latin America—higher only than that of Bolivia, Haiti and Nicaragua. The population suffered from crippling poverty levels, with 70 percent of the total population and 80 percent of the rural population living below the absolute poverty level. The distribution of income showed an extremely skewed pattern, with 40 percent of the poorest receiving 7.3 percent of the total income, while the richest 10 percent collected 50 percent (CONAA 1991:46-59).

In 1993 public hostility to structural adjustment was instrumental in electing Roberto Reina on an anti-Neo-Liberal platform. However, as a result of the escalating debt burden, rising fiscal deficit, and falling US aid, his attempt to increase social spending and defy international pressure to implement Neo-Liberal measures was doomed from the start. As 1994 wore on, the World Bank and the IMF increased their pressures for more privatization, more cuts in transport subsidies, and increases in sales taxes, which provoked widespread strikes and other protests by the Honduran population (Green 1995:229).

Central American governments continued their emphasis on the nontraditional agricultural export sector and sought ways to diversify their export base to generate larger

amounts of foreign exchange (USAID 1991). As nontraditional farming expanded—increasing the already high number of landless farmers in the region—land values increased, squeezing smaller producers of their holdings. Without adequate redistribution measures, nontraditional agro-export promotion led to an even more inequitable distribution of income, the further impoverishment of the rural areas, and the increased vulnerability of the population in general (Garst and Barry 1990: 89-90).

Honduras ranked last among all Central American countries according to the new development estimate created by the United Nations in 1990, the Human Development Index (HDI)—a composite measure calculated from multiple indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income (UNDP 1992). High population growth rates and lack of economic alternatives have forced growing numbers of rural peasant to put unprecedented pressures on natural resources by adopting destructive agricultural practices in their home areas or by seeking survival elsewhere, either in the rapidly expanding urban centers or in the lat vestiges of tropical forest. The World Bank estimates that the average annual rate of urbanization remains at approximately 5.5 percent—the highest in all of Central America (World Bank 1992:264-5). Honduras is the only country in Central America with an urban population distributed between two large centers—Tegucigalpa, the capital with a population of close to a million inhabitants (Humphrey 1997:215), and San Pedro Sula, a large urban center in the north with a population of roughly 465,000 people. In fact San Pedro Sula is the fastest growing city in all of Central America (ibid.:186). Many of these rural immigrants end up in overcrowded squatter shantytowns where problems such as violence, inadequate sanitation facilities, poorly constructed housing and dangerous location on unstable

slopes place their inhabitants in extreme conditions of environmental and social vulnerability.

The problems discussed in the previous sections affect a large percent of the inhabitants of Honduras. Women, however, have been disproportionately impacted by these interrelated and mutually reinforcing crises that resulted in the high levels of vulnerability of many Hondurans. The following section discusses the social and cultural construction of the gender differentials in the vulnerability and resilience of the Honduran population.

Gender Factors

In any given society, women's opportunities are always more limited in quality and scope than those of their male counterparts (UNDP 1995). Gender inequality is not only unacceptable on moral grounds. It also constitutes one of the most significant obstacles to the increased human development of a country (UNDP 1998:20-21).

Conditions of vulnerability or resilience are deeply embedded in everyday life structures, including gender differences in socioeconomic status, domestic responsibilities and power, and access to and control over resources such as income, health, education, and political representation. In times of crisis, whether from an acute shock such as Hurricane Mitch, or a chronic stress such as the pervasive economic crisis that affects most of the Honduran population, the already disadvantaged status of women is likely to be exacerbated and become more conspicuous. Disaster events can perpetuate the poverty trap for women and contribute to what has been described as the "feminization of poverty" (Ollenburger and Moore 1993).

Less than fifty years ago, article 24 of the 1953 Honduran Constitution, pertaining to the definition of citizenship, excluded women as members of such category. The "universal right to vote" was established in 1956, with the elimination of gender and ethnic restrictions. On May 12, 1989 the Cabinet for Social Development passed a Project of National Policy on Women (*Política Nacional de la Mujer*). No specific measures were implemented because the Project was revoked the following year when President Callejas came to power and started a draconian program of economic adjustment measures. The disproportionate impact that structural adjustment measures have had on women in developing countries has been clearly documented. Empirical evidence shows that as a direct result of adjustment programs, and their associated reduction in social spending, the working conditions, education, and health of women and girls have been severely affected (Spring 1989; Sparr 1994; Green 1995). In Honduras, cuts in social spending were accompanied by the elimination of subsidies and by increased water and energy tariffs, while minimum wages remained unchanged. The ensuing reductions in real income led to worsening health, nutrition, education and housing indicators. Women, particularly poor women, bore the brunt of the human cost of the austerity programs (CONAMA 1991:57-59).

In spite of the severe effects of the structural adjustment programs on poor women and men, the Honduran government has continued to see the implementation of market-oriented policies as a necessary precondition to tackling the ongoing economic crisis (Stonich 1993). Although there has been an acknowledgement that poverty alleviation must be made more central to national economic strategies, gender concerns have taken a back seat. The Project of National Policy on Women initiated in 1989, and

revoked in 1990 before any measure was actually implemented, was never re-instituted. Honduran women had to wait almost another decade—until February 11, 1999—for a Special Law to be passed creating the Honduran Institute of Women (Instituto Hondureño de la Mujer) (UNDP 1999:27-28). As a result of the impact of Hurricane Mitch, the already disadvantaged situation of Honduran women was exacerbated and had became more conspicuous, which might account for the passing of this Law a few months after the disaster. At the completion of this study, however, no real action had been taken to implement said law, and the creation of said Institute of Women remained an unrealized project.

As noted by Enarson and Hearn Morrow "[t]o the degree that disasters are rooted in unresolved dilemmas of global development, gender and development issues are disaster mitigation issues…" (1998:226). According to the Human Development Index (HDI)— an estimate created by the United Nations in 1990 calculated from multiple indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income—Honduras ranked last among Central American countries. This Index is an indicator of the human development of a country's population as a whole, both women and men (UNDP 1992). The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) was created in 1995; it measures the same variables as the HDI but also takes into consideration the differential results for women and men. The values vary from zero to one, with a value close to one representing an almost ideal level of gender equality. According to calculations carried out by the United Nations Development Programme in Honduras, the results of the GDI place the country in a range that varies between 0.500 and 0.600—in comparison, Costa Rica, the most developed country in Central America, has a GDI ranging between 0.75 and 0.830. The evolution of

the GDI in Honduras shows no significant improvements in gender development since 1990.

Table 3-2. Gender-related Development Index. Honduras: 1990-1997.

Year	GDI	Life Expectancy		Proportion Of Literate Women*	School Enrollment Ratio		Share of Earned Income	
		Women	Men		Women	Men	Women	Men
1990	0.507	68.3	63.6	76.0	43.4	43.0	21.1	77.3
1991	0.535	68.7	64.0	78.7	44.7	43.3	22.1	76.1
1992	0.562	69.2	64.4	81.6	48.7	48.4	23.4	74.6
1993	0.564	69.6	64.8	80.5	45.0	45.0	23.3	74.7
1994	0.562	70.1	65.2	83.1	46.4	46.5	22.8	75.4
1995	0.566	70.6	65.6	82.4	45.7	45.7	22.5	75.8
1996	0.523	71.0	66.0	82.0	46.2	46.6	22.1	76.2
1997	0.522	71.4	66.4	81.5	47.1	46.7	22.4	75.8

*Note: In relation to literate men.

Source: Adapted from UNDP 1998.

Studies show that gender inequality in Honduras is more acutely manifested in differences in economic participation. Women have fewer opportunities to participate in the labor market because of cultural constraints that relegate them to the domestic sphere, and make them almost exclusively responsible for housekeeping and childrearing activities. When Honduran women do participate in the labor market, it is generally in low-productivity, low-income sectors. As a result, on average, men earn three and a half times more income than women in all available economic activities. As the UNDP recognizes, women's work in Honduras is critical to the well-being of their families and of Honduran society as a whole. However, much of the work women do is unrecognized and underreported. In other words, "women's work counts, but it is not computed" (UNDP 1995).

The 1997 World Report situated Honduras in the last third of a world scale of gender equality. This report computed Gender-related Development Indices for 175 countries. The first position in the world scale was occupied by Canada (0.939 GDI), and the last one by Sierra Leone (0.155 GDI). Central American countries obtained the values listed in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3. Central America: Gender-related Development Indices.

Country	GDI (1997)	Ranking
Honduras	0.522	103
Costa Rica	0.822	36
El Salvador	0.563	97
Guatemala	0.510	107
Nicaragua	0.515	106

Source: UNDP 1988.

Comparing gender-disaggregated data obtained through Household Interviews (*Encuesta de Hogares*) in 1998 and 1999 we can gain interesting insights into the differential impact of Hurricane Mitch on women's and men's economic situation. Data shows that the number of women in the labor force increased by 12 percent one year after Mitch, while the number of men only increased by 5.1 percent. This apparent measure of women's progress is, however, deceptive. UNDP's analysis of these data shows that the number of women classified as "non-remunerated relative" increased by 4 percent in the same period. This indicates that, although more women entered the labor force, they did so by contributing their efforts to the family industry, but without receiving an individual salary for their work. Similarly, the number of women occupied in the unstable informal sector increased, while the number of women working in the formal sector decreased (UNDP 1999:32-33). Educational attainment was one area where the situation of women

showed some real improvement at the national level. In 1999 only two departments had a

School Enrollment Ratio lower for women than for men. These departments are Yoro and

Choluteca, where Morolica is located (ibid.:30).

Another useful index to estimate the relative position of women and men in a

given country is the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). As it was the case with the

GDI, the Gender Empowerment Measure was created by the UNDP in 1995 and

calculates values that vary from zero to one, with a value close to one representing an

almost ideal level of gender empowerment. The GEM measures the situation of women

in terms of the percentage of seats in parliament held by women, the percentage of female

administrators and managers, the percentage of female professionals and technical

workers, and the percentage of women's share of earned income (Table 3-4).

Table 3-4. Honduras: Gender Empowerment Measure 1997-1999

Area	1997	1998	1999
San Pedro Sula	0.518	0.510	0.518
Urban	0.426	0.426	0.421
Tegucigalpa	0.405	0.412	0.393
Rural	0.419	0.387	0.366
National	0.448	0.446	0.450

Source: UNDP 1999

In every year analyzed, the GEM shows higher values for urban areas than for

rural areas, with the large town of San Pedro Sula scoring higher than any other place in

the country, including the capital, Tegucigalpa. In general terms, it appears that Mitch

had a minimal impact on the Gender Empowerment Measure in Honduras. In 1999 this

index reached a value of 0.45, which is the lowest of all Central American countries (no

values were available for Nicaragua) (UNDP 1999:30). The values obtained through the

calculation of the GDI and GEM indices are clear indicators of women's marginalized situation in Honduran society.

The vulnerability approach to the study of disasters is concerned with the social processes of marginalization that produce unequal risks to hazards (Blaikie *et al.* 1994). In light of the clearly disadvantaged situation of women in Honduran society, it can be assumed that Honduran women are generally more vulnerable to hazards than their male counterparts.

The International Women's Year (1975), and the Mexico City Conference that began the subsequent UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) were important events that gave impetus to the incorporation of women into development and humanitarian initiatives (Spring 1995: 5). More recently, the declaration of 1995 as the year in the United Nations' International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) to focus on women and children as the "key to prevention" provided impetus for researchers and practitioners to emphasize gender and age as essential variables in disaster research and practice. Studies have demonstrated that incorporating gender considerations can improve the efficiency of disaster mitigation and recovery programs. Gender-sensitive interventions are more successful at empowering the vulnerable, particularly women, to make their lives more resilient against hazards and crises of all kinds (Enarson and Hearn Morrow 1998).

Summary

As illustrated by the previous discussion the latter part of the 20th Century witnessed enormous transformations in the physical and social environment of Honduras. These changes included dramatic environmental degradation, profound conversions in

land use patterns, drastic falls in per capita production of basic grains, inadequate employment opportunities to earn cash to buy food, and a general decline in nutritional status. Food security is beyond most rural people's means because production of the staples they consume has decreased, at the same time that their ability to buy food has dwindled (Stonich 1991). These constraints have been compounded by significantly high population growth rates, which are placing enormous pressure on the available natural resources. The increasingly unequal distribution of resources resulting from the expansion of export-oriented agriculture further exacerbates the severe human and environmental problems of the area, leading to increased levels of vulnerability among a large proportion of the population. While these problems affect a large percentage of the population of Honduras as a whole, women have been disproportionately impacted as a result of the clearly disadvantaged situation that females occupy in Honduran society.

CHAPTER 4
ANTIGUA MOROLICA: THE SETTING OF THE DISASTER

The previous analysis of the interactions among the larger environmental, demographic and socioeconomic factors that characterize Honduras as a whole is expanded in this chapter with an examination of the southern region, and the local conditions in the Department of Choluteca and the Municipality of Morolica. The town of Morolica—the focus of this study—is the capital of the Municipality of the same name. The Municipality of Morolica is located in the Department of Choluteca, in the north-eastern portion of the Southern region, which includes the Departments of Choluteca and Valle. Significantly less developed than most other areas in the country, the Southern region is not only the more environmentally degraded area of Honduras; it is also the most populated (Stonich 1993:1). An analysis of the physical and political economic factors that characterize the Southern region and the Department of Choluteca in general, and the Municipality of Morolica in particular, provides a better understanding of the conditions that resulted in the vulnerability, and ultimate destruction of the town of Morolica. An examination of gender factors, including the gender and age division of labor, adds depth to this analysis by illustrating the differences between females and males that lead to the construction of gender-differentiated vulnerability and resilience.

Southern Honduras

Southern Honduras, located within the Pacific watershed along the Gulf of Fonseca, is a triangular-shaped region covering approximately 5,775 square kilometers. It

includes the Departments of Choluteca and Valle (Figure 4-1). Choluteca is further

divided into sixteen municipalities—Valle has nine—each of which further subdivided

into smaller towns and hamlets, known as *aldeas* and *caseríos*.

Figure 4-1. Map Showing the Departments of Honduras. Source: www. hondudata.com

Southern Honduras is characterized by steep slopes, rugged terrain, irregular

precipitation, and erosion-prone soils, which make the area extremely susceptible to

environmental destruction (USAID 1982). The Southern region is fed by five major river

systems—the Goascarán, Nacaome, Choluteca, Sampile and Negro Rivers—

(SECPLAN/USAID 1989). The coastal mangrove ecosystems along the Gulf of Fonseca

are bordered by the southern lowland plains. As it was the case with the rest of the

country, when Hurricane Mitch hit Southern Honduras between October 21 and

November 1, intense rains caused major flooding in these lowland areas and river basins,

resulting in tremendous destruction. Further inland, the coastal mangroves become steep foothills that quickly turn into jagged mountain ranges, or highlands. These highlands are extremely rugged. They form a broad base to the northeast that constitutes 62 percent of the region, with slopes varying from 15 to 66 percent where agriculture is a highly risky enterprise (Stonich 1993:36).

The Choluteca plains are scorchingly hot for much of the year, particularly during the dry season, with daytime temperatures occasionally exceeding 40° degrees (Humphrey 1997:7). Although Morolica is located in this region, temperatures are somewhat cooler due to the altitude of the nearby mountains.

In the past, the region's natural resources included pine, oak, mangrove forests, and a wide fertile coastal plain. Human and environmental conditions, however, have deteriorated dramatically in the last decades. When Hurricane Mitch devastated the area most of the population was already living in chronic poverty and facing severe resource constraints. Pollution resulting from the indiscriminate use of pesticides and other chemicals, and environmental degradation due to unsustainable agricultural activities, overgrazing, deforestation, and indiscriminate fuel wood collection, had ravaged the once abundant natural resources. The productive potential for current and future generations has been significantly reduced, the existence of myriad plant and animal species has been threatened, and the health of the population has been seriously compromised (Stonich 1993).

Since World War II, semi-subsistence agriculture in Southern Honduras has generally been located in the highlands and foothills, while the cultivation of agricultural commodities for export has increasingly predominated in the lowlands. Most small

producers are concentrated on the steep mountain slopes that are marginal for agriculture. Although large landholdings are relatively rare in rural highland communities (Boyer 1982; cited in Stonich 1993:39), there is considerable inequality in access to land among people farming the steep slopes. In recent years, fallow cycles have been significantly shortened or eliminated in most parts of the region (Stonich 1989, 1993) further contributing to soil degradation.

Significantly less developed than most other regions in the country, the complete integration of Southern Honduras did not take place until the 1950s, with direct national and international ventures to foster economic development in the region (Stonich 1993:49). As part of the government's efforts to stimulate national economic growth, the South was for the first time drawn into national, Central American and foreign markets—especially US markets in the 1950s. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the US, The World Bank and IDB helped fund a variety of projects in the region. In 1959, the Pan American Highway linking Nicaragua and El Salvador with Honduras was completed. The Pan American Highway passed through the south's major urban centers of Choluteca and Nacaome, which were linked to other municipal centers and to the hinterlands by a system of penetration roads. Government supervised bus routes were established and private buses began providing services for peasants and merchants (Boyer 1982:90). The restructuring of agriculture in Southern Honduras since World War II has impoverished both the landscape and a growing percentage of the population. The general trend has been toward resource oligopoly, patterns of exploitation and production that jeopardize future sustainability in exchange for quick profits, wanton destruction of natural resources, and underemployment (Stonich 1993:45).

International and national development efforts after World War II fostered the growth of the livestock industry. Export quotas to the United States were increased, promotional efforts were undertaken to stimulate the beef trade and to modernize beef production, and credit programs were established to help expand the production of beef for export. Cattle raising, traditionally concentrated in the lowlands, expanded to highland areas during the cattle boom of the 1960s and 1970s (Stonich 1989, 1993). Between 1960 and 1983, 57 percent of the total loan funds allocated by the World Bank for agriculture and rural development in Central America supported the production of beef for export. During that period, Honduras obtained 51 percent of the total World Bank funds that were disbursed in Central America—of which 34 percent were for livestock projects (Jarvis 1986; cited in Stonich 1993:67-68). Although the promotion and growth of the export commodities was not limited to livestock, it was the expansion of the cattle industry that had the most extensive and devastating social and environmental consequences.

Small producers have been increasingly forced onto steep and marginal lands as politically and economically more powerful landowners concentrated their holding on the roughly fifteen percent of the arable land (Annis 1995:123). The trees that once covered the Southern mountain areas have all but disappeared, cleared by cattle ranchers anxious to produce pasture for their cattle, by dispossessed farmers desperate for land on which to plant food crops, and by the southern people in general, who rely almost exclusively on fuel wood for cooking and other energy needs. The bare slopes show the ravages of erosion, which has precipitated the widespread degradation of the region's watersheds (Stonich 1993). Though fifty-six percent of the population was rural before the hurricane,

more than seventy percent of farms were less than 3.5 hectares (Paolisso *et al.* 1999:261).
Those small landowners were disproportionately impacted by the storm damage
(Nitlapan-Envio 1998:3).

Southern Honduras is not only the more environmentally degraded area of the
country; it is also the most populated (Stonich 1993:1). In spite of the high infant
mortality rate and the extensive out-migration that characterizes the Southern region,
population densities in the south have remained significantly higher that those of
Honduras as a whole due to fertility rates higher than the national average.

Since the early twentieth century, Southern Honduras has had the challenge of
absorbing thousands of immigrants from neighboring countries. Political tensions and
widespread economic crisis through Central America have been a key factor behind much
of the immigration. Immigration of Salvadorans has contributed to the alarming
population growth of Southern Honduras. A significant number of Salvadoran
immigrants worked in the banana plantations during the 1930s and 1940s. The number of
immigrants from El Salvador looking for land or jobs was especially high between the
early twentieth century and the onset of the 1969 Soccer War between El Salvador and
Honduras (Merrill 1993). In 1969 El Salvador and Honduras were competing in World
Cup qualifying soccer matches. At the game in San Salvador, local Salvadorans attacked
visiting Honduran fans. Honduras retaliated by evicting thousands of Salvadoran
immigrants who had illegally crossed the border into Honduras led by the severe
overpopulation and economic crisis that dominated their country in the 1950s and 1960s.
El Salvador invaded Honduran territory and bombed Honduran airports on July 14, 1969.
The actual war lasted only 100 hours but the two countries were at odds for over a decade

until a peace treaty was signed in 1980. In spite of this treaty, relations between the two countries remained strained, especially during the 1980s when El Salvador erupted into civil war, sending fresh waves of refugees across the border into Honduras (Keller *et al.* 1997:314).

Armed conflict in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador in the 1980s resulted in the arrival of more than 60,000 refugees. Most of these refugees lived near their respective borders. Through the 1980s, Nicaraguan refugees continued to arrive in Honduras as the war between Nicaragua's Sandinista government and the Contras intensified. By the early 1990s, Honduras hosted an estimated 250,000 refugees or immigrants from Central America (Merrill 1993).

During the 1980s Southern Honduras was flanked by the political revolutions that devastated the neighboring counties of Nicaragua on the Southeast and El Salvador on the West. While media coverage focused on military actions and human suffering in those countries, the desperate and worsening circumstances of the people of the southern region of Honduras went largely unnoticed. Yet, according to most measures of income, health and nutrition, the situation of most southern Hondurans was as bad or worse than that of their neighbors in El Salvador and Nicaragua (Stonich 1994).

The latter part of the 20th Century witnessed enormous transformation in the physical and social environment of Honduras as a whole. As previously discussed severe environmental degradation, profound conversions in land use patterns, drastic falls in per capita production of basic grains, inadequate employment opportunities to earn cash to buy food, and a general declined in nutritional status are some of the most severe problems (Stonich 1991). The impact of these factors has been profoundly felt in the

Southern region, where Morolica is located. Southern Honduras is more dependent on agriculture than is the rest of the country, with approximately 70 percent of the population directly relying on agriculture for their livelihood; yet, two thirds of all farms in the region are less than 5 hectares in size, too small to provide sufficient income for the average rural family (Stonich 1991). Low income, widespread undernutrition and chronic health problems—respiratory diseases, diarrheal diseases, malaria and dengue—also characterize the area (PAHO 1990) making the southern region one of the most vulnerable areas in Honduras.

The Department of Choluteca

Spanish officer Cristóbal de la Cueva founded the city of Choluteca in 1535. He named it Villa de Jerez de la Frontera, and established it as part of the General Captaincy of Guatemala. The Department of Choluteca was founded in 1825 as one of the 18 Departments that make up the Republic of Honduras. The name "Choluteca" derives from the "Cholotegas" or "Chorotegas", the native inhabitants of the region believed to be of Mexican—Toltec—origin (Oseguera de Ochoa, Hernández Rodríguez, Patiño *et al.* 1999:19).

The Department of Choluteca is bordered by the Departments of Francisco Morazán y Paraíso to the north, the Departments of Valle and the Gulf of Fonseca to the west, and the Republic of Nicaragua to the southeast. The Department covers 4,211 square kilometers, and is divided into 16 Municipalities and 194 hamlets. According to the 1998 Census the population of the Department was 295,484. Of this total 88,812 lived in the capital, also called Choluteca. Population density is very high (70.2 inhabitants/Km^2), compared to the national average (39.6 inhabitants/Km^2). Furthermore,

the population is also very young, with over 15 percent of Cholutecans beings under 5 years old, and 67 percent being under 25. Predictions indicate that the Department's population will continue to grow significantly into the Twenty First Century (Oseguera de Ochoa, Hernández Rodríguez, Patiño *et al.* 1999:19).

Table 4-1. HDI for the Department of Choluteca in 1998.

Municipality	Human Development Index (1988)
Choluteca	0.617
San Isidro	0.588
Marcovia	0.573
San Marcos de Colón	0.563
Duyure	0.551
Perspire	0.535
San Isidro de Flores	0.523
Morolica	0.522
Santa Ana de Yusguare	0.518
Oroquina	0.517
Namasigue	0.516
El Triunfo	0.505
Apacilagua	0.498
El Corpus	0.484
San José	0.477
Concepción de María	0.450

Source: Adapted from calculations by UNDP 1998.

In Honduras, a country of 6.3 million people, 73 % of the population live in extreme poverty. More than half (60 %) of those people live in the Department of Choluteca (CEPAL 1999:178). In 1998 the Human Development Index (HDI) for the Department of Choluteca was calculated at 0.525, significantly lower than the average for the entire country, which reached 0.550 (UNDP 1998).

Table 4-1 lists HDI values calculated for the 16 Municipalities that comprise the Department of Choluteca. The Municipality of Morolica, with an HDI of 5.22, ranks 8th in the Department. Life expectancy in the Department is 68.22 years, slightly lower than the national average of 68.72. Similarly, the literacy rate for the Department is 66.43%, lower than the 69.65 % national average. Among illiterate Cholutecans, 57.5 % are women and 42.5 % are men (UNDP 1998).

The Department of Choluteca was one of the Honduran regions more severely affected by Hurricane Mitch. According to a 1999 study carried out in the Department by researchers from the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras* (National Autonomous University) and the *Centro Internacional de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo* (International Center For Development Research) (PLATS/UNAH 1999), over 45% of the population of Choluteca was still living in shelters, and over 14 % was living with friends and relatives as of February 1999. Flooding (65%), and landslides (18,2%) were found to be the primary causes of destruction in the Department. The study also found that 57% of the population lost their crops, of which 56% was corn, 10% were beans, 10% was sugarcane, and 9% was sorghum. Additionally, over 65% of the population reported having lost some or all of their animals, the overwhelming majority of which (93.6%) were chickens.

These losses have been compounded by the conditions of unemployment that affect much of the Cholutecan population. Before the Hurricane, only 40,82 % of the population was employed (43.2 % of them were women and 56.8 % were men). Table 4-2 shows unemployment rates for the Department.

Table 4-2. Unemployment Rates in the Department of Choluteca.

Unemployment Rates		
	1998 Before Mitch	1999 After Mitch
Women	58.6 %	58.8 %
Men	41.4 %	41.2 %

Source: Adapted from PLATS/UHAN/CIID 1999

Unemployment rates remain extremely high, but do not appear to have changed significantly after the Hurricane. An interesting detail is that while unemployment increased by .2 % among males, it decreased by the same percentage among females. This figure is consistent with findings for the country as a whole that show increases in the number of women entering the labor force after Mitch. However, most of them found jobs in the unstable informal sector or were classified as "non-remunerated relative" (UNDP 1999:32-33). As it was the case for Honduran women as a whole, all available data indicate that Cholutecan women are also significantly disadvantaged compared to men and, therefore, more vulnerable to hazards and crises that their male counterparts.

Most of the population of Choluteca was already living in conditions of severe resource constraints and chronic poverty when Hurricane Mitch devastated southern Honduras. The Municipality of Morolica in particular was characterized by extreme poverty, and very high illiteracy and infant mortality rates and undernutrition levels.

The Municipality of Morolica

According to authorities from the IHAH (Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia; Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History) no systematic study of Morolica has ever been published. This statement was confirmed by my own research at the National University and the National Honduran libraries. A study of upper respiratory

diseases conducted by a citizen of Morolica as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Medicine was a possible exception. The study, carried out in the 1970s, included a very limited and outdated statistical description of the population of Morolica. More useful was a short unpublished monograph produced by Ayuda en Acción (AeA), a Spanish Humanitarian NGO that had been working in the Southern region prior to the disaster. Some of its officers had visited Morolica before Mitch, and plans for a community development programs were in their early stages before the Hurricane. AeA specializes in sustainable participatory development, not disaster relief, and although some of its officers visited the disaster area on several occasions and offered some immediate material assistance to Morolica, AeA was not directly involved in the relocation project. They were however planning to renew their offer to collaborate with the Morolican community once the relocation and infrastructural reconstruction stages had been completed.

All municipal records kept in Morolica were lost during the Hurricane, as was most of the documentation gathered by the Census Bureau and other agencies in Tegucigalpa. Further difficulties in reconstructing Morolica's lost past stemmed from the fact that, as time went by, its inhabitants tended to idealize their memories of their life in the destroyed community. Morolicans' fondness for their lost town was expressed in a hymn, composed during their stay in the shantytown in El Tejar, titled *"Mi Querida Morolica"*—my dear Morolica—that portrayed the community as a beautiful prosperous town. As described by its inhabitants, Antigua Morolica appeared to have contrasted sharply with the outlying villages and hamlets where most of the modern amenities—electricity, water system, telephone, health clinic, post office, etc.—that had been present

in the old town Center before the hurricane were not available. Morolicans liked to emphasize those differences when they talked about their old community. This sense of pride, and possibly idealized image of their lost town can be considered as a vital adaptive mechanism. It provided a means through which Morolicans attempted to regain a positive self-image, and a sense of worth as individuals and as community members. Perhaps it also diminished the accuracy of their reminiscences. The information presented in this section is primarily based on descriptions of the community as it was remembered by its inhabitants, complemented by data from AeA's monograph, as well as some information gathered by the Reconstruction Committee organized in Morolica shortly after its destruction.

Antigua Morolica is the name used by Morolicans to refer to the town that was destroyed by Mitch, in order to differentiate it from the new, relocated community, known as Nueva Morolica. The site of Antigua Morolica was nestled in a Y-shaped valley formed by the confluence of the Choluteca and Texiguat Rivers—known locally as Río Grande and Río Chiquito, respectively. Many buildings in the town were more than 100 years old. Some were built with concrete but many still used traditional adobe bricks—baked mud mixed with straw. Soils in the Municipality of Morolica are generally dry and, according to Morolican farmers, soil fertility has been declining over the years. However, the fields that surrounded the old town were described by Morolicans as lush with grazing pasture and fields of corn, melons and sesame plants kept moist by the rivers. Many, particularly the elderly, frequently reminisced about their lost town's shady dirt streets lined with yellow-flowering acacias and fruit-bearing tamarind trees. Although it has been reported that disaster survivors may have a tendency to idealize

their lost community (Oliver-Smith 1986), the few surviving pictures indeed show pleasant boulevards and parks lined with modest homes and shade trees.

The town of Morolica is the capital of the Municipality of the same name. It is located in the Department of Choluteca, in the north-eastern portion of the Southern region, which includes the Departments of Choluteca and Valle. The Municipality of Morolica is comprised of the capital or *Centro Municipal*—Municipal Center—and five more villages—known as *aldeas*—each associated with numerous smaller hamlets— known as *caserios*. There are 163 *caserios* in the Municipality of Morolica (AeA 1998:7). According data from the 1998 Census (ibid.:2-3), the Municipality of Morolica had 5,395 inhabitants of whom 1,615 lived in Morolica Centro at the time of the disaster. Table 4-3. Demographic Data on Morolica.

Communities	Houses	Females	Males	Total Population
Morolica Centro	288	809	806	1,615
Agualcaguaire	88	241	258	499
Cerco de Piedra	156	392	465	857
El Potrero	115	350	354	704
La Enea	184	455	496	951
San Marquitos	157	350	419	769
Total	988	2,597	2,798	5,395

Source: National Honduran Census, Preliminary Information, 1998.

Prior to the disaster, two major roads connected Morolica with the rest of Honduras: Morolica-Choluteca, and Morolica-Tegucigalpa. The Morolica-Choluteca road was severely damaged by the floods and remained impassable until the summer of 2000. For over a year and a half the road between Morolica and Tegucigalpa was the only way in and out of the Department. At the time this research was carried out this road was in deplorable condition, and it was not uncommon for the bus to take 8 hours to cover the

126 kilometers that separate both communities. The outlying *aldeas* and *caseríos* are connected to the town of Morolica by a network of unpaved roads and footpaths. Although limited bus service connecting some of these communities to the municipal center is available, service tends to be erratic, and many communities are difficult to reach, particularly during the rainy season when roads become muddy and fords too deep to cross.

The population of the Municipality of Morolica is quite young, with over 30 percent of the total being under 11 years (Table 4-4). Families are extremely poor, with annual incomes lower that US $1,400; illiteracy rates exceed 40 percent; infant mortality rates reach 60 percent, and undernutrition levels have been reported at 55 percent for children between 1 and five years (Sánchez 1998).

Table 4-4. Population Distribution by Age in 1998.

Age Group	Number of People
0-11 months	165
12-23 months	163
2-4 years	406
5-11 years	1,057
12-40 years (Females)	1,666
12-40 years (Males)	1,503
50 and over	435
Total	5,395

Source: Ministry of Health, Region 3.

Antigua Morolica had 228 houses, a municipal building that housed the office of the mayor and those of most other authorities in the community, a primary school with 288 students enrolled for the 1998-99 academic year, a secondary school with around 100 enrolled students, a kindergarten, a public library, a small health center staffed by a

doctor from Tegucigalpa assisted by local nurses, a police station, an office of the national telephone company, a post office, a Credit Union, a slaughterhouse, a Catholic church, an Evangelical church, a central park, and a cemetery. Antigua Morolica was nostalgically described by its inhabitants as *"era muy bonita y tenia todo lo necesario"* (it was very beautiful and had all that was necessary). In effect, about 90 percent of the homes and businesses in Antigua Morolica had running water and electricity, and 90 of the 228 houses had received the town's first phone service just three months before the Hurricane struck.

As in most of the country, the weather in Morolica is characterized by fairly well defined rainy and dry seasons, referred to as *invierno*—winter—and *verano*—summer, respectively.

Declining soil fertility is a problem frequently reported by the farmers in the Municipality of Morolica. The best plots were in the hands of the few large cattle owners who utilize them for pasture, displacing smaller peasants to the unfertile foothills, with the consequent increase in deforestation and soils erosion rates (AeA 1998:6). The hillside farmers in Morolica, like most of the highland cultivators in southern Honduras, use systems of shifting agriculture that combine both slash-and burn and slash-and-mulch methods. In the slash-and-burn method, the vegetation on fallow land is cut down and burned at the end of the dry season. The crops that will grow during the rainy season are then planted. More often, however, fallow land enters the cropping cycle through a slash-and-mulch method. In this system brush and small trees are cut down during the middle of the rainy season and then allowed to remain in the field to serve as mulch for the crops that must grow up through them. Intercropped corn and sorghum are the most important

field crops in Morolica. Corn and beans may also be intercropped, beans may be planted alone, or less commonly, sorghum may be planted alone. Hurricane Mitch reportedly destroyed 90 percent of the agricultural production and 35 percent of the cattle production in the entire Municipality.

There is no market in any of the communities comprised in the Municipality of Morolica, including its capital. The closest market is located in Choluteca Capital where, before Mitch, farmers used to sell the crops that had not already been purchased by the intermediaries, locally known as *coyotes*. Most farmers in Morolica, with the exception of the largest ones, sold their crops to the *coyotes* who arrived in town prior to the harvest in order to negotiate selling prices and quantities and then returned when the harvest was complete. A few small producers also sold to local stores, known as *pulperia*s, and directly to neighbors in Morolica. The largest producers rented trucks—or, in a few cases, had their own—with which to haul their harvest to Choluteca or Tegucigalpa in order to obtain better prices. As mentioned above, the road that connected Morolica with Choluteca remained impassable until the summer of 2000; Morolican farmers and merchants struggled to establish new commercial relations in Tegucigalpa, a much larger and complex market than the one they were used to in Choluteca.

Although the population of Antigua Morolica seemed to have been significantly better off than their neighbors in the Municipality, they were indeed plagued by some of the same problems. The region itself is peripheral to the nation, which accounts for the severe deficiencies in infrastructure—no markets, few and poorly maintained roads, insufficient public transportation, only one small health clinic for the entire Municipality—and also explains why it was considered a low priority area for the

National reconstruction authorities, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Life in Antigua Morolica is further described in the following section, where I also carry out the gender analysis of the community.

Gender Issues in Morolica

Differences in women's and men's vulnerability and resilience stem from their different socioeconomic position in society. In order to understand the gender-differentiated impact of Hurricane Mitch in Morolica it is imperative to analyze the socioeconomic and cultural structures that create and maintain women's and men's condition of vulnerability and resilience. Similarly, in order to analyze the impact of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction on the survival strategies adopted by the population it is necessary to begin with a discussion of pre-Mitch conditions. An examination of the gender roles and the gender division of labor in Morolica is an integral part of this analysis.

The division of labor involved in field crop production is based on gender and age. Four and five year old children run errands and carry messages. At four or five boys begin to learn the mechanics of cultivating the land by following their fathers or older brothers to the fields and learning to swing a machete or to plant with a digging stick. An eight or nine year old boy can perform these tasks efficiently and a ten or twelve year old usually can perform as well as an adult. For the most part, smallholders maintain their own plots with the help of adolescent sons and male relatives, except when the fields are burnt, at which times 6 to 12 male neighbors cooperate in the regulation and containment of the burn. Only a small minority of landowners in Morolica hired agricultural labor to burn, plant, cultivate, harvest and process their crops on a regular basis.

Under their mother's supervision, girls learn the responsibilities associated with domestic work. By seven or eight young girls care for younger siblings, help keep the house, feed the animals, and develop skills at grinding corn and sorghum for *tortillas* and preparing meals. Maintaining the *solar*, raising pigs and chickens, making cheese, and baking *rosquillas* and *quesadillas*—pastries made with corn or sorghum, milk and cheese—are also tasks that Morolican girls learn from an early age. A ten or twelve year old girl can manage a household and fulfill the female adult work roles. By the age of 12 or 13, both female and male children are well socialized in the roles they are expected to fulfill as adults.

Morolican women are rarely involved in any phase of the shifting cultivation cycle. However, crops grown in the house gardens—*solares*—are most often their responsibility. Sweet peppers, *chilis*, tomatoes, squash, yucca, cucumbers, onions, fruit trees—*marañón, tamarindo*—and frequently also corn and beans, are among the most common crops grown by women. House gardens provide another source of variety to local diets and well as an occasional source of cash. Animals provide an important source of income as well as a source of animal protein in the diets of local residents. Pigs and chickens are ubiquitously present in most *solares*. Neither is usually eaten; pigs are normally raised and sold for cash while hens are kept for eggs. Turkeys are also frequently found in Morolican *solares*. Animals serve as an important source of cash especially during periods of drought when families are forced to enhance household income because of poor harvests. The cash profits from these sales however, are generally managed by the males. Hunting is very infrequent and primarily a male activity. Fishing is more frequent and a family activity.

The data on Morolican households gathered in this research indicate that very few tasks were not performed by members of both genders at some time, suggesting that the gender division on labor is rather flexible. Interestingly, while many men indicated that they had helped with household chores, collecting water, and gathering fuel wood—traditionally female activities—when necessary, hardly any woman reported getting involved in caring for large animals or any agricultural activities related to field crop production—traditionally male activities. Preparing meals and doing the laundry were two activities carefully avoided by males, on the pretext that they did not have the necessary skills to accomplish them successfully. It is interesting to note that women reported those two activities as their most time consuming tasks after Mitch—post-relocation data is examined in Chapter 7. Before Mitch women did the laundry in their own houses. After Mitch—both during the period spent at the shelters in El Tejar, and later on in Nueva Morolica—doing the laundry required going to the river. Similarly, cooking required having both water and firewood available. Although men reported that they would help gather both items if necessary ("*si no hay más remedio*"), this was apparently not considered necessary as long as there were women or children old enough to do it.

Virtually every household in Morolica used fuel wood for cooking. In Antigua Morolica most households bought their fuel wood at the *pulperías*—small general stores. After Mitch most households collected their own firewood. Gathering fire wood is considered neither a female nor a male activity. However, since it is females who do all the cooking, it is their responsibility to ensure that there is enough fuel wood to do so. Both female and male children were frequently seen helping their mothers with this task.

Income-generating activities in Morolica were classified into seven categories. These are non-agricultural wage labor, agricultural wage labor, commerce, making/selling food, making/selling handicrafts, sale of animals, and sale of agricultural products. These categories were proposed by the participants who attended several focus groups on the subject. Data was gathered through questionnaires. In this section I will report pre-Mitch information. Post-Mitch strategies are discussed in Chapter 7.

Table 4-5. Pre-Mitch Income-Generating Activities.

Activity	% Females	% Males
Sale of agricultural products	8.3	28.5
Sale of Food:	5.6	4.5
Sale of Handicrafts:	5.6	0
Sale of Animals:	8.3	20.4
Merchandising:	14	8.2
Agricultural wage labor:	0	22.4
Non-agricultural wage labor:	30	36.7

Source: Own data.

Agricultural wage labor was a predominantly male activity. No woman reported participating in any agricultural activity related to field crop production—tending the home garden, a female activity, was not considered agricultural work. Sale of agricultural products and animals were also primarily male activities. No men reported selling handicrafts—mainly embroidered placemats and other items; only 5.6 % of women did. The percent of men who sold food was only slightly lower than women's percentage (4.5 and 5.6 percent, respectively). The main difference was that men never cooked the food they sold. They occasionally sold cheese and *rosquillas* made by their female relatives. Merchandising involved purchasing different kinds of goods—clothing, tools, household items—in Choluteca or Tegucigalpa to be resold in Morolica for a

profit, either to the *pulperias* or to individual people. It was differentiated from other sales activities that did not involve traveling outside of Morolica. Non-agricultural wage labor was the most important income generating activity for both females and males. For women, this included occupations such as teachers, nurses, clerks and secretaries at the municipality, seamstresses, and *pulpería* managers. Men's activities were more diversified and included teachers, construction workers, bus drivers, mechanics, policemen, workers at the slaughterhouse, accountants, and municipality employees.

Land ownership reflected a pattern of extreme inequality with 82 percent of the population owning less than half a hectare, 8 percent owning between one and three hectares, 4 percent owning between three and nine hectares, and 6 percent owning between 14 and 19 hectares. Only 18 percent of the households reported owning the land they worked; four percent rented their land, and three percent worked land belonging to relatives.

Use of chemical products did not appear to have been very prevalent in Morolica. It seemed to have been more frequent during the 1980s and early 1990s. However, right before Mitch, 79.2 percent of household did not use any kind of chemical products. Less than 19 percent of households used pesticides, 9 percent used herbicides, and 2 percent used fertilizers. Chemical contamination was never mentioned as a cause of concern for the community. Pollution problems were primarily related to inadequate waste and excreta disposal facilities.

Prior to Mitch, the livelihood strategies of the Morolican families, especially those with very limited access to land, were characterized by a considerable diversification in the sources of monetized and nonmonetized income: subsistence

activities, the production and sale or agricultural and nonagricultural commodities, wage labor, migration incomes and remittances, etc. Also significant was the economic contribution of women, monetized or not, and the importance of child and adolescent labor. Articulating these diverse components was a flexible household organization which Stonich has called "the elastic household" (1993:126), that shifted in terms of membership and production strategies depending on a number of factors, such as the need of labor to participate in agricultural production, and the availability of wage labor and other cash alternatives. Two main components of the elastic household were the practice of fosterage, and migration. Fosterage is more common among families affected by conditions of poverty, migration, and marital or personal problems. In those situations, children are sometimes sent to live with other relatives, usually to smaller hamlets in the rural areas—Antigua Morolica, as the capital of the Municipality, was considered an urban center. In rural areas the costs of childrearing are relatively lower and children can contribute to the household by performing tasks such as collecting firewood, hauling water, and performing errands. The sole survivor of one of the Morolican families that was killed by Hurricane Mitch was a young girl who had been living with relatives in a different town of the Municipality—El Tejar, the hamlet where Morolican survivors built their shelters until they relocated to the new community. She was twelve at the time, but had been living with her relatives for years. She was informally "adopted" by those relatives after the tragedy.

Migration has been another important economic strategy in most households. In every one of the 101 households included in this study, one or more family members had migrated out of Morolica. Virtually all women had migrated to urban rather than rural

areas, with Tegucigalpa being the most common destination. They all worked as domestic servants with the exception of a very small minority who had gone to the capital to attend school. These migrant women very rarely sent remittances to their relatives in Morolica. The wages earned by domestic servants were extremely low—lower than minimum wages—which was justified by the pretext that their living expenses were covered. Those having established themselves in Tegucigalpa, however, frequently provided a place for their relatives to overnight when traveling to the capital. Having a place to stay in Tegucigalpa became an important advantage after Mitch, since it is not possible to travel back and forth on the same day, and the road between Choluteca and Morolica—the only other way out of the community—was destroyed and remained impassable for almost two years.

The most common pattern for males was seasonal migration to rural areas. Seasonal migration typically lasted from a few weeks to a few months and was dependent on the availability of agricultural work. More lengthy migrations—lasting several years or even becoming permanent—to Choluteca, Tegucigalpa or the United States were also common. For males, only seasonal migration made a direct contribution to household economy. Long-term migrants sent remittances only occasionally or never—although economic contributions in both cash and kind became more common after Mitch.

Regarding literacy rates, data gathered in this study indicate that 77 percent of adult women over 14, and 83 percent of adult men reported being able to read and write. Illiteracy was restricted to individuals over 45 for males, while the number of illiterate women was equally distributed among all age groups. In other words, illiteracy remains a problem among the younger generations of women, although not among the younger

generations of men. On the other hand, overall literacy rates in Morolica are significant

higher than those of Honduras as a whole—country totals are 69.4 percent for women,

and 68.9 for men—(UNDP 1999:30).

Regarding community involvement in Morolica, it is interesting to note that 40

percent of women, versus 30 percent of men, reported belonging to a group or

association. Associations were classified as municipal (such as the *patronato* and the

municipal committee), Mitch-related (such as the various reconstruction committees)

religious (study groups; organization of patron saint celebrations), economic (micro-

enterprises, cooperatives, women's bank) and other (mainly soccer clubs). Women's and

men's experience as community workers and informal neighborhood leaders equips them

to respond more efficiently to community crisis, which in turn might help mitigate the

impact of future disasters. In effect, more integrated and cohesive communities have been

found to be more disaster-resilient (Berke *et al.* 1993).

Table 4-6. Membership in Associations.

Type of Association	% Women	% Men
Municipal	5	28.6
Mitch-Related	15	19
Religious	5	14.3
Economic	75	19
Other	0	19

Source: Own data.

Comparisons of women's and men's involvement in groups and associations

reveal significant differences (Table 4-6). An overwhelming majority of women (75 %)

were involved in economic groups, while only 19 percent of the men were involved in

that type of group. Virtually all of women's economic groups were created after Mitch as

part of the "Economic Reactivation" programs implemented by the humanitarian

agencies—discussed in Chapter 6. Men's economic associations, on the other hand, consisted mainly of farmers' cooperatives that had been created before Mitch, but were not in operation at the time this research was conducted. Female participation in Mitch-related groups was slightly lower than that of males (15 % for females versus 19 % for males). Women's presence in municipal and religious groups was very limited (5 % in each case); no women were involved in the groups listed under "other". Men's involvement in the different types of association was more evenly distributed. The highest percentage (28.6 %) corresponds to municipal activities from which women are generally excluded by custom, although not by law.

The percentage of men involved in Mitch-related, religious and other—soccer clubs mainly—activities was 19 % in each case. Although women consistently made up the largest proportion of attendants at religious services, questionnaire data shows that men's participation in religious associations was much higher than women's participation. These religious groups were similar to *cofradías*—although this term was not actually used in Morolica. Participation involved sponsoring, that is organizing and funding, religious festivals, which seemed to be a primarily male activity. The most important religious festival in Morolica is the *"Fiestas de San José"*, the Patron Saint, celebrated around the 19 of March. Religious festivals—not religious services—were suspended during the immediate post-Mitch period. One exception was a non-denominational religious ceremony celebrated on the first anniversary of the destruction of Morolica, on October 30; it was attended by most Morolicans, both Catholic and Evangelicals.

Summary

Morolica is part of a department that is significantly less developed, more densely populated, and more environmentally degraded than most other regions in Honduras, a country that even before being hit by Hurricane Mitch was already the poorest nation in Central America. The devastation caused by the hurricane was also more severe in the Department of Choluteca than in most other regions of Honduras. Furthermore, Morolica also has the dubious distinction of being the only Honduran town to be completely obliterated by the hurricane. That the inhabitants of Morolica managed not only to survive the event, but also to reconstruct their lives and their community under such extremely difficult conditions is a testimony to their resourcefulness and resilience.

CHAPTER 5
THE DISASTER: THE IMPACT OF HURRICANE MITCH

The available evidence clearly indicates that the frequency and severity of natural and technological disasters has been steadily increasing throughout the globe in recent decades. In Central America, hurricanes have posed a consistent threat to the population, with over fourteen hurricanes affecting the region in the past fifty years. The exceptional size, power and duration of Hurricane Mitch dramatically exposed Honduras' high level of social and environmental vulnerability. This hurricane, however, was of such magnitude that it would have had a devastating effect in any part of the world, regardless of the levels of development of that region. In effect, the catastrophe that Hurricane Mitch provoked was the worst disaster ever experienced in Honduras. This fact is particularly alarming, in view of predictions of increased hurricane activity in the Caribbean basin in the next decades (UNESCO 1999).

In order to understand the impact of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras in general, and Morolica in particular, I begin by focusing on the event itself, and describing the devastation left in its wake. I then discuss the immediate responses of the Honduran government and the international community, which were instrumental in assisting the victims and helping the country start the recovery process

Hurricane Mitch

Mitch formed off the north coast of Panama during the extremely active 1998 hurricane season, which ran from June through November. Before it penetrated mainland

Central America, Mitch developed into a Category 5 hurricane, the most powerful and destructive class of hurricane. Hurricane Mitch then set on a meandering and devastating course through Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and finally entered the Gulf of Mexico via the Yucatan Peninsula and Cuba.

Table 5-1. Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale

Scale Number	Wind Speed (mph)	Storm Surge (ft)	Damage Scale
Category 1	74-95	4-5	Minimal
Category 2	96-110	6-8	Moderate
Category 3	111-130	9-12	Extensive
Category 4	131-155	13-18	Extreme
Category 5	>155	>18	Catastrophic

Source: (Abbot 1999:266)

On the afternoon of Saturday, October 24, Mitch received its name by evolving into the thirteenth hurricane of the 1998 season. The 124 mile wide hurricane sustained 87 mile per hour winds and proceeded to travel north from the coast of Panama where it had formed, dumping rain on Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. By the afternoon of Sunday, October 25, Mitch upgraded to a Category 4 hurricane and slowly angled northwest with winds of 134 miles per hour. The following day sustained winds increased to 177 miles per hour with gusts of over 200 miles per hour. Mitch was upgraded to a Category 5 status (Table 5-1) and a Hurricane Warning was issued for Limón in Honduras to the Nicaraguan border. During the afternoon of Tuesday, October 27, the hurricane changed direction and spun southwest. The Hurricane Warning was expanded across the Honduran Coast to the Guatemalan Border (Guiney and Lawrence 1999). Mitch spent a record thirty-three hours at Category 5 status (NCDC 1999). As Mitch

turned south, the winds dropped to Category 4 status causing torrential downpours from water acquired over the ocean during the previous days. Twelve hours after touching the Central American mainland, the winds of Mitch slowed and the storm dropped into the class of Tropical Storm. The Hurricane Warning was subsequently downgraded to a Tropical Storm Warning for Honduras. During Friday, October 30, Mitch meandered through central Honduras and made a devastating turn around the capital, Tegucigalpa. Mitch converted into a tropical depression before entering Guatemala on Saturday, October 31. That day the Tropical Storm Warning was discontinued for Honduras (Guiney and Lawrence 1999).

Table 5-2. Rain Totals From October 25 to 31, 1998.

Station	Inches of water during Mitch	Average Inches of water received under normal conditions.	Percent of annual amount of water represented by the amount received during Oct. 25-31.
Choluteca	36.00	0.85	58
Tegucigalpa	11.10	0.56	27
Catacamas	10.20	0.56	25
La Esperanza	6.60	0.30	30
Puerto Lempira	6.60	0.36	25
La Ceiba	34.60	1.58	30
Tela	22.40	1.39	22
La Mesa	Station flooded	--	--

Source: CIAT-Laderas

Every Central American country was affected by Mitch, but the worst hit were Honduras and Nicaragua. Honduras, in particular, bore the brunt of the damage. The intense rains (Table 5-2) caused major flooding in lowland areas and river basins, especially on the Atlantic coast, the southern departments of Choluteca and Valle, and the

capital, Tegucigalpa, and produced devastating landslides on forested hills and mountainsides (United Nations 1999).

Although the catastrophe that Hurricane Mitch provoked was the worst disaster ever experienced at a national level in Honduras, the available data (Table 5-3) reveals that hurricanes have posed a consistent threat to Central America, with over fourteen hurricanes affecting the region in the past fifty years.

Table 5-3. Fifty Years of Destruction

Year	Date	Name of Hurricane	Location
1950	Oct. 13-19	King	Iriona
1956	Sept. 21-30	Flossy	Utila
1961	July 9-16	Abby	La Ceiba
1960	July 20-24	Ann	North Coast
1964	Oct. 8-16	Isabel	Gracias a Dios
1966	June 4-14	Alma	Gracias a Dios
1969	Aug. 28-Sep. 4	Francelia	Bay Islands
1970	Sept. 8-13	Elia	Gracias a Dios
1971	Sept. 5-18	Edith	North Coast
1972	Sept. 11-20	Irene	Gulf of Fonseca
1974	Sept. 4-20	Fifi	All of Honduras
1978	Sept. 3-12	Greta	Gracias a Dios
1986	Sept. 10-19	Danielle	North Coast
1987	Oct. 14-20	Floyd	North Coast
1988	Sept. 15-18	Gilbert	North Coast
1989	Oct. 14-20	Hugo	All of Honduras
1993	Aug. 10-11	Bret	Gracias a Dios
1993	Sept. 17	Gert	North Coast
1996	July 27	Cesar	Nicaragua
1998	Oct. 28-Nov. 3	Mitch	Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua

Source: National Oceanic Atmospheric Association (NOAA, 1999)

According to the official estimates provided in the National Master Plan for Reconstruction and Transformation issued by the Honduran government, the total number of dead reached 5,657, with 12,272 injured, 8,058 unaccounted for, 1.5 million affected, and 441,150 people whose houses were lost or severely damaged and had to move into one of the 1,375 temporary shelters (PMRTN 1999:4). The main concentration of people in shelters was located in the municipalities of Tegucigalpa, Choluteca and San Pedro Sula. In all, about 276,000 families were affected by the hurricane and over 600,000 people were evacuated (FAO 1999:3). The poorest communities were hardest hit, particularly those living in marginal areas of the urban centers. Many such communities were swept away by flooding, their houses completely destroyed or severely damaged. It is estimated that 60% of the country's infrastructure (roads and bridges) was severely damaged or completely destroyed (UN Inter-Agency 1999:1).

The impact on the agricultural production and infrastructure was unprecedented—both fields and irrigation systems were severely damaged. Provisional estimates of over 50 percent of the agricultural production and their impact on food security are currently being assessed by WFP and FAO missions. These agricultural losses were estimated at approximately US $800 million. The second-season crop (known as "*postrera*" as opposed to the "*primera*" or first-season crop), whose planting was virtually completed at the time the hurricane hit, is the main crop in Honduras. Maize output collected from the second season crop normally represents about 80 percent of annual maize production. The second season for the bean crop is also very important, for it represents about 65 percent of the annual output. Besides the loss of crops for local consumption, cash crops

such as coffee and pineapple were also severely damaged, and there was a near complete loss of production and export of bananas, a main hard currency earner for Honduras. These losses not only had serious consequences for the financial situation of the country, but also caused hundreds of thousands of Hondurans to suddenly lose their jobs and income. Displaced people need food aid until their return home, requiring a long and gradual reintegration process. Furthermore, upon their return home, they must wait until the next harvest for locally-produced food, as well as for their reintegration into normal economic activities (UN Inter-Agency 1999:10). The livestock sector suffered from both the death of a high numbers of animals, as well as the loss of pasture as a result of severe flooding and erosion. The cost of rehabilitation for the livestock and dairy sectors is estimated at US $90 million (FAO 1999:4).

According to the Pan American Health Organization (WHO/PAHO) and the national water and sanitation service (SANAA), 80% of the country's 3,800 aqueducts were damaged, sharply reducing the supply of potable water of 2.9 million consumers (UN Inter-Agency 1999:1).

Data provided by the Honduran Ministry of Health indicate that 23 of the 30 hospitals in Honduras suffered total or partial damage to their water supply system. Over a hundred health facilities, including hospitals and rural health centers, were seriously damaged and/or out of operation, resulting in a severe lack of minimum health prevention and care at a time when more than 100,000 of the population were suffering from various diseases such as diarrhea, acute respiratory illness, dermatitis, malaria and conjunctivitis. Dengue and cholera among other transmissible diseases were endemic in Honduras before Hurricane Mitch. Large parts of most urban areas were buried under mud

contaminated with sewage, chemical products such as pesticides and fertilizers and even decomposing human and animal remains, which represented a serious health hazard apart from preventing the return of the displaced population. Sanitation facilities were destroyed in rural and marginal areas of urban centers, increasing the probability of water contamination and the proliferation of vectors, and well as the contamination of food supplies. Damage to the education sector was devastating. Approximately 25 per cent of the schools throughout the country were destroyed (some 2,800 classrooms), leaving more than 25,500 primary school children without school. More than 30,000 children at the secondary school level were not able to continue their studies and more than 2,000 teachers were displaced from their jobs. Community day care centers and pre-school centers were also destroyed or seriously damaged, leaving 75,000 children without attention (UN Inter-Agency 1999:1-2).

Table 5-4. Summary of Damages in Honduras.

Human	
Dead	5,657
Injured	12,272
Missing	8,058
Homeless	441,150
Urban Centers	
Cities that suffered severe damage	21
Total number of cities affected	60
Municipalities completely destroyed	1 (Morolica, Choluteca)
Municipalities partially destroyed	15
Housing and Public Buildings	
Houses destroyed	66,188
Houses damaged	82,735
Shelters built	1,375
Classrooms destroyed	2,800

Table 5-4. continued.

Transportation	
Bridges destroyed	189
Primary roads damaged	47
Secondary roads damaged	60
Local roads	200
Penetration roads	224
Communications	
Telephone	17,000 lines were lost
TV and Newspapers	Continued their service
Health Infrastructure	
Health Centers Damaged	123
Health Centers Destroyed	8
Aqueducts Destroyed	1743
Latrines Destroyed	53,435
Agriculture and Livestock Production	
Agricultural losses	US$800 million
Livestock losses	No available estimates

Source: Secretaría de Salud de Honduras. Programa de Preparativos para Desastres.

The widespread destruction caused by the hurricane was compounded by the highly vulnerable economy, unequal distribution or resources, widespread food insecurity and severe environmental degradation that characterized Honduras prior to the disaster (Stonich 1993). Other factors that shaped the conditions of vulnerability in Honduras included the dangerous locations of some communities, the ineffectiveness—or non-existence—of warning systems, and the slow response of the population. Communities were directly at risk because of the location of their farms and settlements. People who lived and worked near rivers and streams had never before experienced water levels and velocities of the magnitude caused by Hurricane Mitch, and were unprepared to cope with its impact.

Between October 25 and November 1, the Department of Choluteca suffered the worst disaster event in its history. This Department is characterized by a large number of rivers flowing through it, including the Choluteca, Texiguat, Grande, Negro, Nacaome, and Vértigo Rivers, to name a few. The torrential rains dumped by Mitch as it passed through this Department (Table 5:2) created extremely high water levels that found their outlets through the rivers, causing intense flash floods (Ranganath 2000). Hurricane Mitch's impact on the 16 Municipalities that comprise the Department of Choluteca was particularly severe in the agricultural sector, including the loss of 10,043.850 quintals of basic grains such as maize, beans, and rice, 5,650.000 quintals of exportable items such as coffee, 20,872.400 quintals of bananas; 3,600.000 quintals of sugarcane, and 4,056.400 quintals of melons (PLATS/UNAH 1999:98).

Choluteca's educational sector also suffered serious destruction, with 25 % of the educational centers in the Department having been damaged. The building of the Central Ministry of Education was completely flooded, and lost all of its equipment furniture and archives (Ranganath 2000).

Numerous health centers in Choluteca were damaged, 94 bridges were completely destroyed and 75 were severely damaged. Additionally, 52 highways were completely destroyed, seriously affecting north-south accessibility. Over twenty aqueducts between the cities of Tegucigalpa and Choluteca wer damaged or destroyed, affecting 70 % of the potable water supply in Choluteca (Ranganath 2000).

As in the rest of Honduras, the disaster in Morolica was caused by the combination of people's vulnerability, and the impact of Mitch. All structures in Morolica were located along the banks of the Choluteca and Texiguat Rivers. The

majority of pre-Mitch cultivation was near these rivers where small seasonal floods deposited rich sediments on the land. Consequently, the floodplains of both rivers were the most productive areas for cultivation. The magnitude of the flood can be directly related to environmental degradation around the Choluteca River's headwaters. Large amounts of runoff and erosion caused by rapid deforestation and soil compaction throughout the interior of the country were exacerbated by the hurricane rains. The location of the old site of Morolica, nestled in a valley formed by the confluence of the two rivers, was the most immediate factor leading to its destruction. Fortunately, the prompt and efficient response to early warnings of the community, led by their mayor, saved the lives of most of its people.

Responses to the Disaster

Due to the magnitude of the disaster, President Flores of Honduras launched an international appeal on November 2nd, 1998, calling for assistance to the victims of Hurricane Mitch (UN Inter-Agency 1999:2-3). This appeal resulted in a massive response valued at over US $40 million from the international community, and included the assistance most of the bilateral and multilateral agencies and NGOs resident in Honduras. In addition, the World Bank made available approximately US $100 million for immediate emergency and reconstruction needs following the hurricane.

The Honduran government's post hurricane actions instituted changes that will impact the future of the country. Beginning November 19, three weeks after the hurricane, the Honduran Congress enacted a series of institutional changes. With domestic and international pressure to expedite the formulation of reconstruction plans, Congress passed the Law of Administrative Facilitation, which concentrated power in the

office of the President. The Law allowed President Flores to create a Special Cabinet for National Reconstruction. The Reconstruction Cabinet consisted of four ministers: the Minister of the Presidency, the Minister of Public Works, the Minister of Finances, and the Minister of International Cooperation, all of whom respond directly to the President (Falla 1998: 22).

The national authorities set up an *ad-hoc* Emergency Management Committee (*Comité Nacional de Emergencia*, CONE), created by Presidential Decree, to function as an information center, with the Minister of State in overall charge. The Permanent Committee for Contigencies (*Comité Permanente de Contingencias*, COPECO) is the coordinating agency for all the Regional Disaster Committees (*Comité Nacional de Emergencias*, CODER) and the Municipal Disaster Committees (*Comité Municipal de Emergencias*, CODEM). Information flows from the CODEMs to the CODER, then to COPECO and finally to CONE.

At the national level, the process of immediate coping and stabilization in Honduras involved personal determination and great displays of solidarity. Private and public buildings, including private homes, hospitals, churches, and hotels opened their doors to the displaced and homeless. Throughout the country, municipal governments organized rescue and aid distribution groups (Falla 1998:19). People gradually progressed through the recovery process.

International aid started to enter Honduras immediately after the hurricane. Before food and other emergency supplies reached the country, money was sent from abroad to open national bank accounts (Falla 1998:20). The United States and Spain took and early lead in donating relief supplies. On November 5, the U.S. government began delivering

its largest–ever immediate foreign disaster emergency aid through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense, and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USAID 1998).

In Honduras, most United Nations System entities share common installations as well as many services—the different agencies are all located in one building, located in Tegucigalpa, popularly known as *Casa de las Naciones Unidas*, House of the United Nations. At the moment Mitch arrived, the System established an Emergency Coordinating Group and the appropriate Agency was designated to coordinate each emergency activity. The UN System was one of the first agencies to mobilize its resources immediately after the hurricane struck, providing assistance to the Honduran government services involved in relief and rescue operations. This assistance included financial and technical support for the provision of food aid, water supplies, and medical care. The System was also the first international organization to make communication systems available. The UN system in Honduras established a special "Mitch website" on the Internet to keep the international community informed—daily at the outset—through updated assessments of the number of victims and the level of damages as well as the initial response by the government, donor countries, the Red Cross and the NGOs (UN Inter-Agency 1999).

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued twelve "Situation Reports" to inform the international community and to mobilize international assistance. A six-person United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team was dispatched to Honduras to assist to the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Honduran Government in the overall assessment of the situation and outstanding needs,

as well as in the coordination of the international assistance. A senior emergency adviser was recruited by the United Nations Resident Coordinator to facilitate the coordination process within the UN agencies and provide support to the government and the international donor community. Agencies such as WFP, FAO, WHO/PAHO, and UNICEF developed emergency plans and operations and were closely involved in the assistance to the victims of this disaster. FAO immediately provided relief assistance and collaborated with government authorities with the assessment of the situation and the needs of the population. UNDP provided CONE with equipment and technical support (UN Inter-Agency 1999).

The WFP (World Food Programme) was the UN agency responsible for implementing the food assistance programs. Immediately after Hurricane Mitch, in–country WFP food stocks previously designated for development projects were provided to meet the urgent needs of 100,000 victims. Soon after, the WFP approved a Regional Emergency Operation (EMOP) in the four countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) that were most affected by the hurricane, at a total cost of about US \$58.4 million, of which US \$31,369,700 were earmarked for use in Honduras (UN Inter-Agency 1999). The national government counterparts were the Technical Secretariat for International Cooperation (SETCO), and the National Commission for Contingencies (COPECO). These institutions in turn coordinated food distribution with other Government Agencies, the Honduran Red Cross and NGOs.

In Morolica, the WFP collaborated with the humanitarian agencies and coordinated—and supplied the resources for—the "food for work" program that was implemented in conjunction with the reconstruction projects.

The Destruction of Morolica

Torrential rains had started lashing Morolica on October 26, 1998. Concerned about the alarming news received from Tegucigalpa, the mayor of Morolica contacted COPECO's (Permanent Committee for Contingencies) headquarters in the capital on October 29. He was advised to abandon the town, but no additional information or instructions were offered. That very day, the Emergency Committee (CODEM) of Morolica was established. Its ten members were "authorities" of Morolica—members of the Municipal government, representatives from the local institutions such as farmers' cooperatives and religious associations, teachers and cattle ranchers. All ten members were male. They agreed to take turns watching the behavior of the rivers, and asked the population of Morolica to stay alert. At 5 pm, on October 29, two CODEM members drove around the community on a car and, bullhorn in hand, asked the population to head for the hills immediately and remain awake that night.

Next morning, most people started moving to neighboring areas such as El Tejar, Las Delicias, Palo Bonito, and El Amparo, all of them close to Morolica Centro, but higher uphill. Many expected to be back in their homes within a day, so they took few provisions when the water started to rise late on the afternoon of Friday, October 30. Others stored their belonging in the churches and looked for shelter in the health center and the schools.

At 6 pm on October 30, the retention wall that World Vision had built in 1992-93, after the floods caused by Hurricane Gilberto had threatened to destroy the town, was washed away by the Choluteca River. By then most people had abandoned their houses and had taken shelter in the churches, health center, or the neighboring areas mentioned

above. At 6:45 pm the mayor of Morolica phoned COPECO once more. Again, he was simply advised to abandon the town. He then phoned his sister, who worked as a teacher in Choluteca, to let her know that Morolica was about to be washed away by the floods and ask her to call "Radioamerica" (a radio station) requesting immediate help. That was the last phone call ever made from Antigua Morolica before its complete destruction. Police officers fired several rounds as a signal warning the people who still remained in Morolica to evacuate the village. On more than one occasion, the mayor had to order the police to break down doors and carry reluctant citizens to higher ground. Older people who had lived in Morolica their entire lives and refused to believe that their community was about to be destroyed, and store owners concerned about losing their inventories, were among those reluctant to abandon their houses.

At 7:30 pm everyone living on the right bank of the Choluteca River had left Morolica. The water rose rapidly, hurling huge pieces of debris into homes and businesses like battering rams. "It looked like the Final Judgment" the mayor commented. Many neighbors reported watching the electric posts collapsing, their lights going on and off intermittently, until they went definitively off at 8:30 pm and Morolica was shrouded in darkness. By next morning the 175-year-old town of Morolica had disappeared, swept away by the rivers on whose banks it used to lie.

The only casualties of Mitch in Morolica were 12 people, members of two families who lived on the left bank of Choluteca River, in an area known as El Rincón. One of the families consisted of 9 people—mother, father, the father's cousin and 6 children). The only survivor of that family was a 12 year-old-girl who had been placed in fosterage with other relatives living in El Tejar. A couple and their adult son made up the

other family. It is important to note that there was no bridge connecting El Rincón with the rest of Morolica. The only way to cross the river would have been walking across during the dry season, or in a boat during the rainy season. When the water level unexpectedly rose on October 29, those families found themselves suddenly isolated from the rest of the community. Several neighbors commented that, given the relatively long distance that separated those houses form the rest of Morolica, and the deafening noise produced by the storm and the turbulent river waters, it is possible that those people simply did not hear the evacuation warnings. In any case, witnesses reported that the victims opted for climbing on the *tamarindo* trees that grew along the banks of the river. They either did not attempt or were unable to climb up the rather steep mountain slopes that flanked the river on its left side. Their screams for help could intermittently be heard until 3 in the morning. At this time the river had completely flooded the town. All buildings and features collapsed and were washed away, including the *tamarindo* trees and the people who had sought shelter in their branches. Their bodies were never found.

Although all municipal records were lost, members of the Municipality prepared a hand-written summary of damages in the community (Table 5-5).

Table 5-5. Summary of Damages in Morolica Centro.

Summary of Damages
Two hundred and eighty eight houses.
Municipal building
Primary school (288 students enrolled for the 1998-99 academic year)
Secondary school (around 100 enrolled students)
Kindergarten
Public library
Health center
Police station

Table 5-5.continued.

Summary of Damages
HONDUTEL office (national telephone company)
Post office
Credit union (Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito)
Slaughterhouse
Catholic church
Evangelical church
Central park
Cemetery

Source: Municipality of Morolica Post- Mitch records.

Practically everyone in Antigua Morolica lost their source of income, and the town's economy was destroyed. Store owners lost their inventories and many months went by before they were able to replace them. Scoured of their topsoil, the fields along the river—whose fertility, according to the residents had already been declining over the years—will no longer be suitable for grazing or crops.

Common in post-disaster scenarios, strong social solidarity characterized the days after the onset of the flood in Morolica. During the initial emergency phase, in which the various social differences that characterize a community disappear, people considered themselves to be in the same situation and behaved in very altruistic ways. Collective action after the flood contributed to the survival of the people huddled on high ground. Those in nearby communities where the waters did not reach opened their homes for the displaced and provided shelter, water and food. The initial sense of solidarity and cooperation that disasters seem to evoke in many cultures and societies around the world has been called the "post-disaster utopia", although as Oliver-Smith commented in reference to the survivors of the massive earthquake that destroyed

the Peruvian town of Yungay in 1970, "there is little that is utopian in the lives of disaster victims" (1992: 76).

The torrential rains continued on October 31—it had been raining uninterruptedly since October 26. The mayor of Morolica asked his father, who was 62 years old at the time, and three police officers to accompany him to Tegucigalpa; two of the police officers refused to join them on such a dangerous journey. At 7 in the morning on October 31, the mayor, his father, the mayor's cousin, and one police officer left their provisional shelter in Las Delicias and headed for the country's capital in search of assistance for their ravaged community. The group arrived in Tegucigalpa on Sunday November 1, at 7:30 pm and headed for the offices of AMHON (Association of Honduran Municipalities) where the mayor was interviewed by public relations officers of the institution.

The mayor remained in Tegucigalpa for eight days during which he contacted representatives from a large number of humanitarian institutions and emergency agencies in the capital, requesting immediate assistance for his community. One of his first achievements was to have helicopters from the Honduran Air Forces fly to Morolica, bringing food, medicines and other needed items. Such helicopters started arriving on November 3. The mayor returned to Morolica on one of the helicopters provided by the Mexican Air Forces. Mexico was among the first countries to offer their help to the Honduran people.

The mayor of Morolica stayed in Tegucigalpa during most of the next 6 months, channeling aid for his community. The CODEM of Morolica also worked for 6 months after the destruction of the town. Their main responsibilities included coordinating the

distribution of food and other provisions, and organizing the community into work groups. After 6 months they considered that the emergency phase had concluded, giving way to what they called the reconstruction phase. The CODEM was therefore dismantled and replaced by a Reconstruction Committee.

Post-Disaster Relocation in Honduras

A significant source of vulnerability throughout Honduras was the hazardous location of many settlements and communities on dangerously steep slopes prone to landslides and mudslides or, as in the case of Morolica, within the floodplain of rivers and streams. I expected that the resettlement of those communities would be one of the primary measures taken by the Honduran authorities to reduce people's vulnerability to future events.

Prior to my arrival in Honduras I had hoped to be able to establish a typology of resettlement programs. I searched in vain for a central agency or institution in charge of coordinating relocation projects that could provide me with a list of all resettlement programs being implemented. I soon found out that no such institution exists in Honduras. A consequence of recent "decentralization efforts", projects at the municipal level were handled by the Municipalities, headed by the mayors, with the assistance of AMHON, the Association of Honduran Municipalities. AMHON is a governmental institution that coordinates and supervises the functioning of the 291 Municipalities in the 18 Honduran departments, under the principles of decentralization. They operate as a coordinating mechanism among Municipalities, and between Municipalities and other institutions, including the National Government. Municipal authorities, however, may or

may not contact AMHON for assistance. As a result, no agency had an inventory of all projects being carried out in Honduras—relocation-related or otherwise.

AMHON authorities informed me that, with the exception of Morolica, no other post-disaster relocation program as such was underway at the time. There were many "housing projects" being carried our by a host of international NGOs, but they were not conceived as relocation projects. Their objective was to provide poor people—not just victims of Mitch—with housing solutions. Beneficiaries typically got vouchers they could use towards the purchase or construction of a house. A case in point was IOM's program (International Organization for Migration).

According to IOM's officers, their organization was the only institution in Honduras that was building "*macroalbergues*" (shelters built after Mitch; as opposed to "*microalbergues*", the name given to the churches, sports facilities, community centers etc., that were used as temporary shelters by the people left homeless by the Hurricane). Most "*macroalbergues*" were located in urban areas; people living in these shelters were of rural origin, and had migrated to the urban centers before Mitch. Three different types of *macroalbergues* were designed: "*Unifamiliares*", "*Cuatrimódulos*", and "*Galeras*".

- *Unifamiliares* were permanent single-family constructions built on donated land, usually by the municipality.

- *Cuatrimódulos* consisted of units of four individual houses built so that each shared two walls with the adjacent two, forming a square. They were also permanent and built on donated land.

- *Galeras* were long rows of barracks. *Galeras* were conceived as temporary solutions, although they were still in operation when I left Honduras almost two years after they were built. They were far more common than the other types of shelters.

IOM itself did not build permanent houses, but helped the municipalities and the NGOs with technical support. They coordinated NGOs and controlled the distribution of

provisions to the shelters. In 1999, over 2,000 families in Tegucigalpa had received a
voucher for US $600, which was equivalent to the down payment on a house. These
vouchers could only be used for this purpose, and were only valid with the 8 housing
companies/NGOs that had been approved by IOM. The fact that the beneficiaries
received the vouchers directly, IOM officers said, gave them the chance to choose the
housing project they preferred. The property title was registered to both members of the
couple and the house could not be sold for a certain number of years. Beneficiaries were
required to contribute their labor—all housing projects were self-construction projects—
and a small monthly installment calculated by IOM according to the beneficiaries'
economic situation.

This voucher program only existed in Tegucigalpa. In other areas IOM limited its
participation to building the shelters and organizing the delivery of food and other
provisions. No such program was implemented in Morolica by IOM, or by any other
organization. No shelters were ever built. Morolicans lived in large multi-family tents
donated by several institutions until around Christmas of that year. These tents were set
up on a soccer field located in an area called Las Delicias—a neighborhood adjacent to
Morolica, higher up on the mountain.

In early January 2000 most residents moved to one of three shantytowns of
makeshift shacks they built themselves in a hamlet known as El Tejar, which is part of
the Municipality of Morolica. According to the mayor, the move was uncoordinated and
there were no planned layouts. He emphasized that the stay in El Tejar was only a
temporary arrangement and that Morolicans would only stay in the shantytowns until
Nueva Morolica was completed.

The Relocation of Morolica

When the mayor of Morolica and his companions arrived in Tegucigalpa on November 1, most rescue efforts in Honduras were focused on the northern Caribbean Coast, where Mitch had stalled for several days, and on the capital, parts of which were submerged in more than 49 feet of water. However, some of the worst damage and most of the deaths were caused not by the strong winds, but by the flood waters that raced down steep mountainsides on the Pacific side of Honduras, ripping out trees and boulders, wiping out roads and bridges and crashing through towns like Morolica.

The two-day odyssey of the mayor to Tegucigalpa catapulted him into the media spotlight. While most local leaders seemed paralyzed by the magnitude of devastation, the mayor's grueling journey—and his continuing battle to help his fellow Morolicans build a new town—made him one of the most popular and admired men in Honduras. At first, the mayor said, people in the capital did not believe that the town had disappeared— Morolica was the only community to have been completely destroyed by the hurricane. But as rescuers from the Mexican military started delivering food by helicopter, word began spreading out that Morolica was indeed no more. "If we had waited for the government, the people of Morolica would still be living in tents, and we would still be waiting for a plan for Nueva Morolica" said the mayor, whose full-time job as the leader of his community earned him about US $120 a month.

The mayor had some knowledge of the workings of international aid groups because of his experience as a regional coordinator for World Vision, a Seattle-based Evangelical relief organization. He became a fixture in the offices of the federal government, international aid and relief groups and foreign embassies. Soon, offers to

help were made by many groups and agencies, and the case of Morolica—frequently referred to as "the martyred town" by the media—became a popular cause in Honduras. Relatives and people who over the years had migrated to the capital also contributed by sending money, food, cloths and other items to their families in Morolica. The Spanish government donated orange-red tents and furniture for temporary schools, which were used for such purpose until the community relocated to Nueva Morolica. They became a landmark of the community and their unusually bright color made then easily identifiable from a distance, as well as from the air. According to some relief workers, this feature made the work of rescue helicopter operations much easier.

In the months that followed the disaster the mayor enlisted the help of several architects in selecting a site for Nueva Morolica. The national government offered no opposition when the mayor, after consulting his constituents, announced on January 10 their decision relocate the town to higher ground, about 5 kilometers upriver from the old site which after the flood waters went down became an uninhabitable riverbed strewn with watermelon-sized boulders.

In January of 1999, after having lived in tents for approximately two months, most Morolicans moved to one of three settlements of makeshift shacks constructed from river debris, plastic tarpaulins, the remains of the tents provided by relief agencies, and the boards they had pried from what remained of their old houses after the flood. These shelters were located in El Tejar, just down the hill from what later became Nueva Morolica, where a neighbor had three large vacant lots he loaned to the Municipality without charging them rent. They relieved themselves outdoors and bathed in the many creeks that flow along the land. Women also drew water and washed their babies, clothes,

and pots and pans in those ravines. Water analysis preformed by various institutions concluded that the rivers were seriously contaminated. UNICEF provided a water purification system which, unfortunately, was frequently out or order as a result of improper use of the equipment, according to UNICEF. Nevertheless, few Morolicans reported having symptoms of amoebic dysentery. Figure 5-1 indicates that adult females seemed to have been affected more than other gender-age groups, although the difference was rather small.

AFFECTED RELATIVES
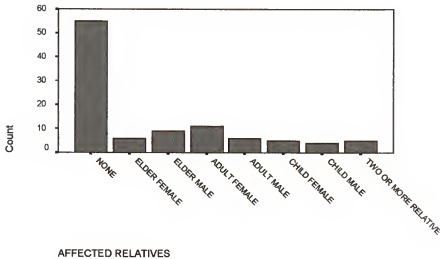
Figure 5-1. Dysentery by Gender and Age. Source: Own Data.

According to the records kept by the medical staff in Morolica, the health conditions of the population did not deteriorate significantly after the hurricane. Some women, and a few men, reported having suffered from frequent headaches and "*nervios*" (nerves), although symptoms were usually not severe enough to require medical attention. Skin disorders, particularly among children, also seemed to have been more prevalent. In general, both women and men agreed that the worse part of moving to the shelters in El Tejar was not the considerable physical discomforts, but the feeling of uncertainty or, as some Morolicans expressed it "*no sabíamos qué iba a pasar*" (we did

not know what was going to happen), "*cuánto tiempo estaríamos aquí*" (how long we would be here), or "*qué iba a ser de Morolica*" (what would become of Morolica).

However, this situation of uncertainty did not last very long. The "*Comité de Reconstrucción de Morolica*" (Reconstruction Committee of Morolica) was soon established. It was composed of what Morolicans called "*las autoridades*" (authorities), which included the mayor, other members of the Municipal government, wealthy landowners and cattle ranchers, police officers, teachers, etc., all of them male. My questions regarding the selection of the Reconstruction Committee received vague responses suggesting that everyone expected "*las autoridades*" to be part of any committee. In fact, it seems that the Emergency Committee set up the day before Morolica was destroyed, and the Reconstruction Committee established to handle the relocation and reconstruction of the community, were virtually identical.

The first task of the Reconstruction Committee was to select a site for the construction of the new community. After intense negotiations between the Committee and the owners of the various plots initially considered, a site was finally selected. The site was a flat area more than twice the size of the old town, located uphill from El Tejar about 5 km away from the site of the lost town. Townspeople and construction workers cleared the site for the new community in February 1999, and construction of the new 312 houses began in late March. The new community was built by the women and men of Morolica themselves, under the supervision of professional construction foremen. The land cost about US $60,000, a quarter of which was borrowed. To pay this money back, townspeople had to buy their plots and homes for between US $75 and $225, depending

on their assets and income. Since most families lost everything in the flood, arrangements were made for them to receive seven-year, low-interest loans.

Residents, represented by the Reconstruction Committee, chose the style of the houses and the materials to be used—for instance, they insisted on higher walls and tile roofs—but the size of the plots and houses was determined by the funding agencies—mainly Malteser and CAM—based on cost. The first 100 houses, built with funding from CAM (Central American Mission) and ASIECAH (*Asociación de Inglesias Evangélicas Centro Americanas de Honduras;* Association of Evangelical Central American Churches), were completed in September 1999. On September 13 1999, an inauguration ceremony attended by representatives from CAM and the central offices of the Association of Evangelical Churches from Dallas, Texas, was held in what became Nueva Morolica. It was the first community celebration held by the Morolicans since the Hurricane.

When, at the end of the ceremony, the president of the Association of Evangelical Churches, presented the community with a symbolic key to those first 100 houses, the mayor reciprocated by handing him a thank-you letter that contained a list of additional requests for the new town, including the need to build a park, a soccer field, and other recreational facilities. The letter was received with a promise to attend to these additional needs. The remaining 212 houses were built with funds from Malteser, a German Catholic humanitarian agency. The role of these agencies is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Hondutel—the national telephone company—installed a single phone line in Nueva Morolica. It was frequently out of order and, since no one in the community was

qualified to repair it, they had to wait for someone to travel to Tegucigalpa and request assistance. Both SANAA and ENEE—the national water and electricity companies, respectively— postponed work in Nueva Morolica until the road that connected this town to Choluteca—the capital of the Department to which Morolica belongs—was repaired. I was told that SOPTRAVI—the Ministry of Transportation—did not consider this road to be a national priority. At the time I left Honduras, the Reconstruction Committee and representatives from AMOHN were still in conversations with the Minister of SOPTRAVI about this matter.

Some Morolicans said that they were overwhelmed and saddened by the magnitude of their losses, but most also expressed relief at once again having permanent, if small, roofs to call their own. Before the hurricane, many people lived in large, multiple-bedroom houses that had been in their families for generations. All houses in Nueva Morolica are sited on 60-by-75-foot plots arranged in a grid pattern. Families of up to eight people were crammed into one-room homes of roughly 13-by-16 feet— according the data collected for this study the average number of rooms in pre-Mitch Morolican houses was 5. The small size of the new houses was frequently mentioned as one of the least liked features of Nueva Morolica, as will be discussed in the section on life in the relocated community.

Final relocation to Nueva Morolica began in March of 2000. At the completion of this research in July of 2000, most Morolicans had relocated to the new site, and continued working with the humanitarian agencies and Evangelical groups on the physical and socio-economic reconstruction of their community.

Summary

The catastrophe that Mitch provoked was the worst disaster ever experienced at a national level in Honduras. The Department of Choluteca, where Morolica is located, was one most severely affected regions of Honduras. Choluteca is characterized by a large number of rivers flowing through it. Most of the destruction was due to the intense flash floods caused when torrential rains born of Mitch created extremely high water levels on these rivers. Similarly, the most immediate factor leading to the complete destruction of the old site of Morolica was its location in a valley formed by the confluence of two rivers. Morolica received much more attention than any other town in Honduras due to a large extent to its mayor's connections with various relief groups. In effect, Morolica became a symbol of Honduran reconstruction. Assisted by numerous humanitarian agencies and Evangelical groups, Morolicans rebuilt their lost town and relocated to the new site in the spring of 2000.

CHAPTER 6
DISASTER EVANGELISM: RELIGION AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Although analyses of religious beliefs are rarely integrated in most political ecologically oriented studies, it is clear that religion plays an important role in framing the way people interpret—and cope with—disasters. Religion is an integral element of people's ideological as well as material realms of life and, in the ways in which it affects women/men and human/environmental relations, it has clear implications for the vulnerability or resilience of the population. People's understanding of the ultimate origin of disasters has implications for future level of vulnerability in the region. If catastrophes are believed to be caused by supernatural forces—God's punishment—measures to reduce vulnerability may be oriented toward ideological, rather than material or physical prevention. The apparent growth of the Evangelical church in Morolica after the hurricane pointed to an increased emphasis on ideological and spiritual notions.

In this chapter I discuss the impact of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction on the religious beliefs and practices of the Morolican population. In particular, I address the question of what a shift to Evangelism might mean for the Morolicans who claim to have abandoned their exclusive allegiance to traditional Roman Catholicism. I begin my analysis by briefly discussing the role of the Catholic Church in Honduras, and by defining some of the most relevant aspects of the Evangelical tradition. I then describe Evangelical religious life as practiced in Morolica, and discuss the possible reasons for the differential conversion to Evangelism by women and men.

Finally, I present some concluding remarks on the links between religious affiliation, resilience and vulnerability.

Religious Pluralism in Honduras

Although Honduras is a secular state with "guaranteed freedom of religion" Anglo Protestants and Latin Catholics have long contended for political and cultural supremacy in the Americas. The Catholic Church in Honduras has traditionally been one of the poorest and most understaffed in Central America. There are approximately 300 hundred ordained priests—most of them from other countries—for a population of nearly seven million. The Catholic Church attempted to address this situation by creating a program, called "Delegates of the World" in which women and men of the laity were trained to be spiritual leaders of a given parish. The Delegates of the World program has spread to much of Central America. In recent years the number of Delegates of the World working in Honduras had increased to over 10,000 (Humphrey 1997:28).

The Honduran Catholic Church has been a force advocating social change and reform (Merrill 1993). However, its involvement in direct social activism has been much more moderate than that of other Central American Catholic Churches, notably in El Salvador. The role of the Church as an advocate for social change increased in the late 1960s after the Second Vatican Council, and particularly after the meeting of the Latin American Conference of Bishops in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. The Honduran Catholic Church accepted the involvement of its members as active agents of social change. In fact, during the early 1970s, Church leadership encouraged its priests and delegates to pursue the "social option for the poor" and take an activist stance (Humphrey 1997:28).

By the 1970s various Catholic Church organizations allied themselves with the Christian Democratic Movement of Honduras (*Movimiento Demócrata Cristiano de Honduras-MDCH*), resulting in the creation of a group know as CONCORDE, which was part of the Council for Development (*Consejo Coordinador de Desarrollo*). By this time, the Honduran Catholic Church had come to be perceived as radical. "The impact of this activism was felt down to the parish level" (Merrill 1993:9).

In the late 1970s, however, tensions between various groups emerged regarding the proper approach to social change. The Jesuits in particular advocated even greater involvement in activism that the hierarchy of the Church supported (Merrill 1993:9). The massacre of 10 peasants, two students and two priests in the Department of Olancho in 1975 at the hands of wealthy landowners, put a swift end to the campaign (Humphrey 1997:28). The Church hierarchy's opposition to further involvement was underscored by its withdrawing from CONCORDE (Merrill 1993:9).

During the late 1970s and 1980s, as Central America took center stage in the Cold War, and particularly as a result of the situations in Nicaragua and El Salvador, Honduran activist priests were accused of being communists (Merrill 1993:10). With the decline of the insurgency in the area, tensions between activist priests and the Church's hierarchy eased. Since the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, the Catholic Church has once again begun to speak up on social issues, but no longer defines its role in Honduras as one of advocacy (Humphrey 1997:30).

Evangelical missionary work in Honduras has been spearheaded by the Central American Mission (CAM). CAM was organized in November 14, 1890 by Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, a pastor of the First Congregational Church of Dallas, Texas. During

the 1888 Niagara Bible Conference at Niagara, New York, Mr. Scofield learned that, except for a small Presbyterian mission in Guatemala, there was no organized Protestant work in Central America. Further enquiries revealed that, while the European Protestant missionary societies considered the evangelization of Central America to be the responsibility of the United States, the mission boards of the large US Protestant denominations claimed to be unable to undertake Evangelical work in Central America. When CAM was created in 1890 Costa Rica was to be their first objective. CAM's work in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador started in 1896, and in Nicaragua in 1900 (Winn 1964:8-11).

When European Protestants gave up Latin America as a mission field in the early 1900s, North American missions mushroomed in this region. With countries closing their borders across Asia—another potential area of Evangelical work—more North American Evangelical missionaries relocated to Latin America than to any other region of the world (Stoll 1990:10). Some scholars have commented that the wish of North American missionaries to transform Latin America can be hard to separate from the fact that the United States plays a dominant political and economic role in this region. Evangelization is not exclusively a North American enterprise. Nevertheless, more than half of the world's Evangelical missionaries come from the temples of the United States (Stoll 1990: 70). As Stoll pointed out, "[w]hen evangelists say that the secret of North American prosperity is its Protestant heritage, many Latin Americans are.....willing to listen" (Stoll 1990:11).

Evangelical Protestantism can be defined as a tradition distinguished by three main beliefs, including the complete reliability and final authority of the Bible, the need

to be saved through a personal relation with Jesus Christ, often expressed in terms of being "born again", and the importance of spreading the message of salvation to every nation and person (Stoll 1990:3). Evangelicals place heavy stress on the source of authority. They also emphasize the divinity of Jesus and the necessity of having a personal faith in Him in order to achieve salvation (Bowen 1996:6). Militant Evangelism encourages individualism, industriousness, and sobriety, and even a measure of upward mobility. However, not a lot is heard about social justice. This contrasts sharply with the ethical values of humility and service generally promoted by the Catholic tradition.

Another fundamental character of the Evangelical world-view is its exclusivism. This refers to their conviction that their faith is the only true faith and that all others are therefore heretical and dangerous or, at best false and misguided (Bowen 1996:127). In Morolica, this religious exclusivism was most clearly and forcefully directed against Catholicism. Morolican Evangelicals did not consider Catholics to be real Christians and expressed this belief frequently and in no uncertain terms by referring to non-Evangelicals as "*los no Cristianos*" (non Christian) and "*los no bautizados*" (not baptized). Although exclusivism also characterizes Catholic ideology, I never heard a Catholic Morolican claiming that other religious affiliations were false or misguided. When Evangelicals confronted Catholics who rarely had any religious instruction beyond the catechism classes of their early youth, Evangelicals had the decided edge in biblically based debate. For not a few Evangelicals it was an appealing and reassuring notion that only their convictions had been reached by a careful weighing of the biblical evidence and that their faith alone was based on a provable, biblical foundation.

Unlike Catholics, Evangelicals do not believe in Purgatory. There is no intermediate stage between Heaven and Hell; one either saves oneself through personal faith, or condemns oneself to eternal damnation through disobeying Evangelical teachings. One core objection of Evangelicals is that Catholics have a misguided faith on religious figures other than Christ. Honduran folk Catholicism, as it is common in most parts of Latin America, is characterized by its focus on and devotion to a variety of Saints, some of the most notable of whom are female—like the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico and the Virgin of Suyapa in Honduras. Evangelicals contend that Catholics practice idolatry by worshiping images rather than having a personal relationship with Christ. In condemning this tradition, Honduran Evangelicals reject a central element of national identity and further deprive women of positive female role models. Interestingly, some recently converted Evangelical women refused to give up their devotion to the Virgin, claiming that "*no hay nada malo en rezarle a la Virgencita*" (there is nothing wrong in praying to the Virgin).

The final goal for Evangelicals is the reformation and transformation of individuals through a personal relationship with Christ rather than the reform of social institutions and practices. For Evangelicals, personal transformation through religious conversion is the only way society can be reformed. In return, followers are asked faith and obedience, which even the humblest of folk can offer.

Disaster Evangelism

"The hungry man has no ears", says an African proverb (Shorter 1994:7). In other words, "[o]ne cannot expect someone who is starving, or numbed by pain, for example, to be convinced by verbal argument" (ibid.). Material needs have to be tended to first

before the Evangelical message can be understood. In principle, this notion refers to the Gospel's imperative to "feed the hungry and minister to the suffering". Universal love should not only be preached, but also practiced, some Evangelical missionaries claim. Evangelical interest in helping the victims of wars and natural disasters, however, can easily degenerate into a form of bribery, promising material advantages to those who embrace the Gospel. Such bribery may even be justified in certain fundamentalist circles on the grounds that material prosperity is a reward of faith (Shorter 1994:19). Conditioning aid in such a way could easily produce "rice bowl Christians", converts whose main interest in the new religion is receiving the material advantages. The original term "rice bowl Christian", which emerged during the Evangelical involvement in China, Vietnam and Cambodia, has been transformed to "corn Christian" when applied to Mexican and Central American converts for whom economic benefits or rewards are the primary reason for Evangelical commitment (Bowen 1996:137).

The Evangelical missions in Honduras are "well aware of the relation between social stress, the resources at their disposal to alleviate it, and interest in their religion" (Stoll 1990:11). It could be argued that these groups are engaged in what has been sarcastically termed "disaster Evangelism". "Drawn to wars and natural catastrophes, evangelists hand out food, set up medical clinics, help rebuild communities, and train leaders to start churches" (ibid.:12). The two best known sociologists of Protestantism in Latin America, Emilio Willems (1967) and Christian Lalive d'Epinay (1969), agree that interest in Evangelical Protestantism is frequently related to how uprooted the population is, a finding that seems to predict the success of "disaster Evangelism". For example, colonizers of frontier areas and recent migrants to cities are known to be particularly

receptive to Evangelization efforts. For people whose lives have been torn apart by war, poverty, or natural disasters, Evangelism provides a new source of meaning that helps them make sense of their situation (Stoll 1990:13).

One of the first occasions when such practice was widely recognized was the 1976 earthquake in Guatemala. When the earthquake killed thousands of people, it also shook the survivors' confidence in their old religious faith. Helping them reconstruct their lives after the catastrophe was the now familiar legion of Evangelicals. The Guatemalan earthquake illustrated the advantages of Evangelical involvement in humanitarian and development assistance. The rate of Evangelical growth in Guatemala went from 8 percent a year before the disaster to 14 percent after it. Relief work is such a prevalent practice that Latin Americans often complain that Evangelicals are in fact "buying" converts (Stoll 1990:13). This very sentiment was often expressed by numerous Catholic Morolicans, somewhat alarmed by the growing number of people who attended Evangelical services.

Religion as a Catalyst for Change in Post-Mitch Morolica

Evangelism's appeal in Morolica has perhaps been influenced by the failure of the Catholic Church to respond to the needs of its constituency. For instance, there has never been a resident Catholic priest in the entire Municipality. Before Mitch, a priest from Choluteca—the Capital of the Department where Morolica is located—used to visit Morolica every week for Sunday mass. After the destruction of Morolica, Catholic religious services were presided by a local delegate. He was a very poor old peasant and, although he was well loved and respected by the community, he did not have the energy, training or resources to compete with the much more active and savvy Evangelical

pastors. To become a Catholic priest requires years of training, education, and resources often not available to Honduran peasants. In contrast, one can become an Evangelical pastor in less than a year. Morolican Evangelical pastors were local men who came to live in the community and prayed along with their congregants.

Pre-Mitch Morolica used to have two churches: a Catholic church and an Evangelical church. The Catholic church housed the statue of San José, the Patron Saint of Morolica, which was lost during the Hurricane. Both churches were destroyed by Mitch, along with everything else in the community. However, the Catholic church was completely swept away by the floods, to the point that no part of the building remains visible. On the other hand, the roof and part of two walls of the Evangelical church are the only recognizable structure of the old community. Morolicans placed especial importance on this fact, and, while many lamented the loss of the Patron Saint, some took it as a divine sign that their faith in Catholicism was perhaps misplaced.

In contrast to the imposing Evangelical temple that dominates one of the main streets of Nueva Morolica, built with funding from the Central American Mission, a very rudimentary open-walled structure is used *en lieu* of a proper Catholic church. At the time I left Morolica, the community was still in conversations with Catholic religious authorities in Choluteca to get permission—and funding—to build a new Catholic church.

Morolican Evangelical religious life was primarily enacted in the congregation. The Evangelical *cultos* (religious services) held nightly in Morolica were far from the hell-fire-and-damnation speeches I had expected; instead they were highly participatory ceremonies, with clapping, singing, group prayer, and supplication for daily needs. There

were frequent references to Mitch as a divine punishment for Morolicans' many vices and sins. Yet, in sharp contrast to this severe discourse, group singing, shouting, hand-clapping, and praying lent a hypnotic, rhythmic air to the *cultos*. Most congregants described the *cultos*, as "*muy alegres*" (very joyous) and continued laughing and singing as they headed home after the services.

A common way of asking someone whether she or he had converted to Evangelism was "*vos aceptais a Cristo?*" (Do you accept Christ?). For Evangelicals, this question highlighted their personal relationship with Christ. However, many Catholics found the way that question was phrased rather annoying—if not downright devious and underhanded—since, in order to proclaim their faith in Catholicism, they were implicitly forced to claim that they had not "accepted Christ".

Post-Mitch Morolica appeared to be becoming more "Bible- and Christ-oriented". The pastors promoted the universal tradition of owning one's own Bible, and bringing it to every service. When the pastor preached, he constantly cited Bible passages to support his arguments, which all were urged to consult, to see for themselves that what the pastor said was demonstrably and unarguably true. Many congregants claimed to be more engaged and stimulated by reading the Bible themselves, as opposed to traditional Catholic masses in which the priest reads out loud to the attendants, who remain passive spectators. Since I did not have my own Bible, I was given one—a beautiful, leather-bound volume with golden-edged pages. Both the pastor and the congregants expected that I would take an active role rather than merely attend the services as an interested observer. It is important to note that, since a number of women were illiterate, they could not fully participate in the cults, as they were unable to read the Bible. A positive aspect

of the Evangelical Church's emphasis on Bible-reading is that they actively promoted literacy programs, which were designed as complementary to the Sunday study groups.

Morolican Evangelical pastors promoted at times a rather fatalistic acceptance of the poor's constraints on their continuous negotiations for survival. This was evidenced by their preaching that individual salvation and well-being were to be achieved solely through prayer and individual efforts. Corruption, evil vice, idolatry and disrespect for authority were, they alleged, distinctive features of Morolica before Mitch. These were the reasons offered by the Evangelicals as sure causes of the disaster. Such reasoning did not prevent many followers from pointing out that Pre-Mitch Morolica's location, on the floodplain of two rivers, might have been a factor that contributed to its destruction. To this, the pastor responded that the Lord had simply taken advantage of natural features to carry out His mission.

On the other hand, the ritual of the nightly service offered Morolican women and men some emotional respite from the enormous pressures under which they lived. The feeling of belonging to a community, and praying with their neighbors, gave them a sense of ease as they struggled with their grief. Moreover, Evangelical groups not only provided the congregants with spiritual and emotional relief, but also assisted them in a material sense. Because hand-outs were frequently distributed at the religious services—such as school supplies, toys and clothes donated by the many Evangelical missionary groups that visited Morolica—people's attendance could be interpreted as an attempt to improve the material—as well as the spiritual—well-being of their families.

Religion and Gender in Morolica

In his decade-long study of Evangelism in Mexico, Bowen (1996) concluded that
for men, conversion and commitment entailed a radical break with past behavior, and
with the social norms or right and proper behavior associated with their gender. Drinking,
gambling, social life organized around bars, avid interest in sports, and the frequenting of
houses of prostitution were all predominantly male recreational pursuits in Mexico—all
practices considered utterly taboo by Evangelical standards. Women too were expected to
change, but the typical transformation was hardly on the same scale as for men. Nor were
transgressions of the female "vices" of make-up and *telenovelas*—soap operas—treated
with the same severity as the male sin of drinking. It is hardly surprising that, in Mexico,
fewer men than women converted, and fewer males in the second generation remained
committed (Bowen 1996:120).

For Morolican men, conversion to Evangelism meant a reworking of their ideas
about proper male behavior, placing an emphasis on individualism, competition, and
personal success. Ascetic practices—that is, rejection of "worldly pleasures"—raised the
question of whether Evangelical affiliation was related to economic or social
improvement. Though there were dissenting voices, the general consensus was that
Evangelical conversion and commitment might be linked to greater accumulation of
wealth through less spending on "vices", as well as to increased literacy because of the
Evangelical emphasis on Bible-reading. It is important to note that Morolicans did not
generally associate "worldly pleasures" and "vices" with Catholicism—even though
Evangelical pastors frequently did in their sermons. They did, however, lament the
absence of a resident Catholic priest and were saddened by the fact that, almost two years

after the Hurricane destroyed their old community, no new Catholic church had yet been built.

Women seemed to be attracted to Evangelism in larger numbers than men. Traditionally, women's roles have been less socially fulfilling than those of men. Morolican women saw Evangelism as a new avenue to personal satisfaction and accomplishment. Evangelism provided women with alternative ways to achieve individual prominence and social participation beyond their domestic sphere. They also claimed that Evangelism was less structured and more egalitarian, "*hay más igualdad*", than Catholicism. Women have been able to hold only low ranks in the folk Catholic hierarchy. In contrast, Evangelism offered greater personal participation and prestige for women because it allowed them to hold higher offices. Additionally, some recently converted Morolican women commented that they preferred what they felt to be as the more personalized and participatory instruction of the pastors.

Female attendance to Evangelical *cultos* was noticeably higher than male attendance, with women being much more likely to attend mid-week services as well as those on Sunday. There were fewer other venues for social interaction available to them. *Cultos* allowed women a safe haven to participate in communal activities. Most women commented that the singing, clapping, and group activities integral to Evangelical services provided an enjoyable diversion.

I mentioned to one of the Evangelical pastors that many women—and some men—attended my focus groups very regularly, also claiming that they were "*muy alegres*" (very joyous). I suspect that the pastor resented the implication that these

women and men would attend any social gathering, Evangelical or otherwise, mainly because of entertainment purposes.

Some women were drawn to the Evangelical world because, they hoped, it would "cure" their husbands and partners of their former vices. Many claimed that family life had become "*más tranquila*" (more harmonious) after their conversion. One female convert told me that life was better since her husband converted because "*ya no me pega*" (he no longer beats me). Faced with these circumstances, many women preferred, it would seem, a responsible if authoritarian husband to an abusive or absent one.

Female equality is, however, far from being a basic tenet of the Evangelical worldview. Quite to the contrary, male power in the Evangelical faith is absolute. "Herein lies the essential appeal of the Evangelical doctrine that the man is to be the head of the household, just as the pastor guides his church and a male God wisely and justly rules over all" (Bowen 1996:126). Thus, Morolican Evangelical women were subordinated to their husbands and partners and, in turn, both females and males were subordinated to the male pastors. Although pastors admitted that women tended to be more responsible and diligent in the performance of their duties, males were usually chosen to the highest offices. Pastors justified their preference on the basis that "there is more respect and authority". Doctrinal arguments drawn from Paul and examples of the all-male apostles were also mentioned.

Pre-relocation data indicate that 27 percent of the women and 10.2 percent of the men in Morolica reported being Evangelical. I must distinguish here between "conversion", which implies transformation in ideology or worldview, and "affiliation" which indicates having been baptized. Figure 6-1 reflects affiliation. That is, it shows the

number of women and men who had been baptized as Catholics or as Evangelicals before the Hurricane.
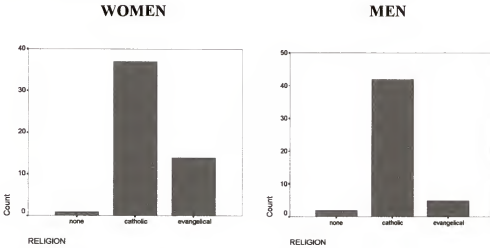

Figure 6-1. Religious Affiliation by Gender in Morolica. Source: Own Data.

In Pre-Mitch Morolica, Evangelicals consistently belonged to the highest socio-economic strata; after the Hurricane this pattern became clearly polarized. The results of cross-tabulating education level and religious affiliation indicate that Evangelism was also polarized on both extremes of the education axis. In other words, those individuals who converted to Evangelism either had no formal education, or were among the most educated members of the community. Education level was directly related to economic status. This polarized pattern could be noticed for both females and males and is consistent with expectations of risk-taking behavior. It can be argued that marginality, on both extremes, spearheads change; those in the most unfortunate of circumstances have everything to gain by innovating, while the privileged are able to innovate because they can assume the possible risks associated with change. Catholicism showed the opposite pattern. Both female and male Catholics belonged to the Morolican middle class, and

either had some primary education or had completed primary school, which was the average education level for Morolica.

In 1999, 11 people were baptized as Evangelicals—3 women and 8 men. By July 2000 eight more people—four women and four men—had expressed their interest in baptism. It would have been interesting to compare these figures with pre-Mitch baptism rates. Unfortunately all church records were destroyed by the hurricane, along with everything else in the community. Evangelical authorities estimate that both the baptism rate and the attendance at religious services had increased dramatically after Mitch. No Catholic baptism took place in Morolica in this time. The priest that used to visit Morolica every week for Sunday mass stopped doing so after Mitch, and the local delegate that had been presiding Catholic services since then did not have the authority to celebrate baptisms.

Evangelical Morolicans used the term *"miembros de la congregación"* (members of the congregation) to refer to those who attended Evangelical religious services regularly, whether they had been baptized as Evangelicals or not. No records on religious attendance were kept, but my own observations indicate that the number of participants usually ranged between twenty and fifty, counting the children. Female attendance was always significantly higher than male attendance; this difference was more marked at the mid-week services that at those offered on Sundays or special occasions.

Religious Pluralism, Vulnerability and Displacement

The fluidity with which Morolicans cross religious boundaries points to the pragmatic approach they have adopted in their struggles to reconstruct their lives. It was common for Catholic women and men to attend Evangelical *cultos* with regularity. These

people did not necessarily express an interest in converting to Evangelism, but participated in the ceremonies because they enjoyed them, and because nothing else was available. On the occasions when a Catholic mass was celebrated they also attended that service. It was, however, far less common for Evangelicals to attend Catholic ceremonies. Although the Evangelical church clearly filled some important social and spiritual gaps in Morolica, the fact that people moved back and forth between religious practices suggests that the various groups met the their needs only partially.

Shifting religious affiliation among Morolicans can be seen as tactics that emerged out of their recent traumatic experiences. With virtually their entire community-resource base and infrastructure destroyed, shifting religious affiliations became a practical, cultural, and emotional response to pressing social exigencies, as well as their own individual emotional and material needs. Mobility across religious institutional boundaries in Morolica can, therefore, be understood as part of a set of social and cultural survival strategies. Additionally, these shifting affiliations point to the ways in which people experience, construct, and contest their collective identities. A poor elderly Morolican woman described her recent interest or "*curiosidad*" (curiosity) in Evangelism as "*estoy probando*" (I'm experimenting). Her entire world was wiped out as Morolica was flooded both by the rivers and by the numerous Evangelical missionary groups that visited the community. Without committing to conversion, she felt that perhaps it was time to "*probar algo nuevo*" (try something new).

The boundaries between religious affiliations in Morolica were neither fixed nor static. Evangelical growth will hinge on the degree to which non-Evangelicals are willing—or induced—to shift their religious allegiance to the new faith. It has been

argued that religious conversion is linked to two important factors. First, conversion is typically brought on by circumstances that produce a radical realignment of beliefs, attitudes, and identity. That is, conversion requires a dramatic personal change on the part of converts (Bowen 1996:11-12). The destruction of Morolica and the subsequent relocation of the community could very well have precipitated such dramatic changes. A second factor is the degree to which the transferred allegiance may be regarded as voluntary or self-directed, as opposed to being manipulated or caused by others. Evangelical pastors in Morolica certainly devoted a great deal of thought, time, and effort to the development of effective methods of evangelism, recruitment, and persuasion. In fact, familiarity with these methods is part of the standard training of Evangelical pastors.

The reasons for conversion to Evangelism are not easily generalizable. They included economic reasons, being persuaded by the pastor, rejection of vices, and preference of the participatory preaching style in the Evangelical Church to the more structured style of Catholic ceremonies. Furthermore, it became evident that women and men had different reasons for being attracted to Evangelism, and that conversion entailed a transformation of the social norms and proper behavior that was different for each gender. Some of the new conversions could in fact be understood as survival tactics in a context of dislocation and catastrophic loss. The economic assistance provided by the Evangelical groups in Morolica helped to reduce the immediate material vulnerability of the population. Evangelism however, might have been contributing to increase the vulnerability of Morolica at a deeper, ideological level. Evangelism as it was preached in Morolica, promotes the idea that one can change the course of history by changing consciousness, in contrast to a perspective that considers that material conditions shape

consciousness, and therefore justifies the perpetuation of inequitable social systems. Evangelicals exhort themselves and their followers to concentrate on improving themselves rather than working for structural change. The Gospel, they preach, can liberate Hondurans from the "chains of sin". Advocates for social justice, however, might argue that the chains that restrain poor Hondurans are not those of sin, but the chains of misery, discrimination and oppression.

Ultimately, the ability of any religious group to grow is not only dependent on its ability to recruit outsiders, but also on its capacity to retain the commitment of its converts and their offspring, the next generation. The success of a mission in recruiting new members need not necessarily translate into a comparable capacity to retain the commitment of its new members (Bowen 1996:11-12). Future trends of religious affiliation in Honduras as a whole, or in any of the many disaster-stricken communities like Morolica where Evangelical groups are proselytizing, cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty. Follow up studies need to be conducted to investigate whether rates of conversion—and commitment—to Evangelism in Morolica continue to be on the increase after the community has become more self-sufficient, and its members are less dependent of the material assistance provided by the Evangelical missions.

Summary

Anglo Protestants and Latin Catholics have long contended for political and cultural supremacy in Honduras. The Honduran Catholic Church has traditionally been one of the poorest and most understaffed in Central America. Its involvement indirect social activism has been much more moderate than that of other Central American Catholic Churches. Evangelical missionary work in Honduras has been spearheaded by

the Central American Mission since 1896. The Evangelical missions in Central America have frequently been associated with the provision of assistance to victims of wars and natural disasters. In Morolica, rates of conversion to Evangelism increased after Hurricane Mitch as several Evangelical missionary groups collaborated with the local population in the reconstruction of their lost town. The reasons reported for conversion to Evangelism generally included increased access to material assistance, being persuaded by the pastor, rejection of vices and a preference of the participatory preaching style in the Evangelical Church to the more structure style of Catholic ceremonies, with women seemingly more attracted to Evangelism than men.

CHAPTER 7
NUEVA MOROLICA: LIFE IN A RELOCATED COMMUNITY

While the Evangelical missions attempted to help Morolicans come to terms with the destruction of their community on a primarily ideological basis, relief agencies and other humanitarian assistance groups hoped to help with the physical aspects of community reconstruction. The distinction between both sets of institutions is rather blurred, since some groups functioned as both humanitarian and religious associations. In this chapter I explore the role of humanitarian assistance in Morolica and describe the major projects implemented in the community. I then examine the most salient aspects of life in Nueva Morolica, the town where the inhabitants of the original Morolica relocated in March of 2000. Finally, I shift my attention to the changes in the survival strategies adopted by the Morolican population, and discuss what these changes may mean for the success of failure of Nueva Morolica as a relocated community.

The Role of Humanitarian Assistance

An important dimension of humanitarian assistance is the distinction between "strategic gender needs" and "practical gender needs". Strategic gender needs are those that result from women's structural subordination in society. Addressing these needs would require correcting the social, political, and economic disadvantages of women. "Practical gender needs", on the other hand, are related to women's traditional responsibility for much of the work in the household and include adequate housing, food and water. Depending on whether they address one or the other kind of gender needs,

interventions can be classified into five basic intervention models: the welfare approach, the equity approach, the anti-poverty approach, the efficiency approach, and the empowerment approach (Andersen 1992:172).

The welfare approach considers women as a vulnerable group and as passive recipients of the assistance offered. Women's role as mothers is emphasized, with the consequent focus on the provision of goods and services, such as food and, recently family planning. This approach has been described as politically safe. Although it addresses some of the practical needs, strategic needs are not met, and the resulting welfare programs may create dependency. The equity approach sees women as active participants in the development process, and their contributions in the productive and reproductive spheres are acknowledged. The ultimate objective of the equity approach is the redistribution of power and the fulfilling of the strategic needs. Difficulties in the implementation of this model may arise as a result of its possible interference with local traditions. /the anti-poverty approach emphasizes women's productive role and focuses onimproving women's access to productive resources. Practical gender needs are addressed as women are provided with more employment opportunities. Strategic gender needs are only met in women's capacity for self-determination is also enhanced. The efficiency approach sees women as "underused assets" and equates increased participation in economic activities to increased equality. Longer working hours and unpaid work are the cost of meeting women's practical gender needs. Strategic gender needs are not addressed by the efficiency model. Finally, the objective of the empowerment approach is to meet the practical gender needs in order to build a support base from which to address the strategic gender needs. This approach focuses on

increasing women's self-determination so they will become more active players in society. The triple role of women—productive, reproductive, and community—is recognized, and emphasis is placed on women's increased control over material and non-material resources (Anderson 1992:173-175). Almost every humanitarian agency working in Honduras also had a project in Morolica (Table 7-1). These projects tended to follow a combination of the approaches mentioned above, as will be discussed in more detail in the description of the individual projects.

Table 7-1. Institutions that Worked in Morolica

Institutions that Worked in Morolica
Malteser
CAM/ ASIECAH
WFP
UNICEF
UNESCO
Agencia Española de Cooperación International (Spanish Agency for International Development)
Ayuda en Acción (Spanish humanitarian NGO)
Bolsa Samaritana
Rotary Club Nueva Tegucigalpa
International Red Cross
Peace Corps
Catholic Church
Hermanas de Maria Auxiliadora (a Religious Group)
Japanese Mission/JICA
Fundación Maria (Presided by the First Lady)
World Vision (Evangelical Humanitarian Agency)
Arboles Para el Futuro (Reforestation Program)
COSUDE (Swiss Agency for International Cooperation)

Source: Own Data

Soon after its complete destruction, Morolica became a symbol of Honduran reconstruction. Because of its popularity, as well as the logistical difficulties that resulted from the destruction of the roads that linked the town with the major urban centers, being able to work in Morolica became both a challenge and a sign of prestige, as many relief workers expressed to me.

As previously discussed, the mayor of Morolica used to be a member of a regional committee that worked with World Vision after Hurricane Gilbert. In 1992-93, after the floods caused by Hurricane Gilbert had threatened to destroy the town, World Vision built a retention wall in Morolica along the Choluteca River. A metal plate commemorating the occasion was still visible in the ruins of what used to be Morolica, a proud reminder of World Vision's involvement in the community. Since then, this wall had successfully contained the raising waters of the River during the yearly rainy seasons. It was not, however, enough to prevent the destruction caused by the massive floods brought on by Mitch. The president of ASIECAH (*Asociación de Iglesias Centro Americanas de Honduras;* Association of Central American Churches of Honduras) at the time of Mitch had been the director of World Vision in Honduras. He also used to be one of the teachers in Morolica. The mayor of Morolica had been one of his students. The wide attention that Morolica received on the part of the many humanitarian agencies working in Honduras can be attributed to a large extent to the mayor's previous experience in dealing with this type of institution.

ASIECAH had organized an emergency committee to coordinate the delivery of assistance to its parishioners immediately after Mitch, working in cooperation with CAM, the Central American Mission. CAM had been operating in Honduras for over a

century—since May 30, 1896. CAM's discourse was very religiously-charged. Constant references to Mitch as "an ordeal that marked the end of the millennium", or as "God's punishment for our sins", and to "science and the Bible coinciding in their predictions of increasing frequency and severity of catastrophes" were a definite feature of their interpretation of the disaster. Judging by their passionate shouts of *"alabado sea el Señor"* (praised be the Lord) it would appear that Morolican Evangelicals accepted those comments as further confirmation that their religious proselytizing was justified, so that Morolica could be redeemed and additional punishment avoided.

Another agency that played a key role in Morolica was Malteser. Malteser is a Catholic humanitarian agency founded in Germany in 1953 by the Order of Malta—the Order the Malta was founded in the eleventh century with the mission of taking care of the pilgrims of Europe in Jerusalem—and the German Caritas Group. The Foreign Aid Service of Malteser coordinates and manages two forms of aid: Disaster relief and emergency assistance, and rehabilitation and development aid for people in need. The Malteser Foreign Aid Service has participated in various peace-keeping missions of the United Nations of behalf of the German Foreign Ministry. The projects implemented by the Malteser Foreign Aid service are financially supported by the German Foreign Ministry, the German Ministry for Economical Cooperation and Development, the European Union, and other groups and institutions (Malteser 1999).

Honduras was the only country in Latin America where Malteser was working at the time this project was carried out; Malteser opened their office in Tegucigalpa a few days after Hurricane Mitch. Its director lived in Tegucigalpa, not in Morolica, but visited the project quite often. He became a very active advocate for Morolica's cause in all their

negotiations with other institutions, and was loved and respected by the Morolicans. He was not a Catholic himself and, in marked contrast to Malteser's, religious proselytizing was never a part of his discourse on reconstruction. I was told that Malteser's involvement in Morolica was rather accidental. The mayor of Morolica happened to run into Malteser's director at a hotel in Tegucigalpa where many representatives from various humanitarian agencies were staying after they arrived in Honduras. At that time the agency's office had not even been officially inaugurated. Malteser initially agreed to finance and coordinate the construction of 200 houses and, later on a school and a kindergarten.

Another important actor in the reconstruction of Morolica was AMHON, the Association of Honduran Municipalities. AMHON is a governmental institution that coordinates and supervises the functioning of the 291 municipalities in the 18 Honduran departments, under the principles of decentralization promoted by the Decentralization Law passed in Honduras in 1990. They operate as a coordinating mechanism among municipalities, and between municipalities and other institutions, including the national government. The usual procedure is for the mayors, or other authorities from the municipalities, to summit requests for assistance to AMHON's offices in Tegucigalpa. AMHON does not generally provide help directly but forwards the requests to the appropriate institution, sets up appointments, provides office space for meetings, and acts as a mediator between the parties involved.

Relocation and Reconstruction Programs in Morolica

Most of the initial assistance received in Morolica came in the form of one-shot types of interventions, usually involving the donation of food, medicines, toys, school

materials and so forth. These interventions were mostly donor-driven and unsolicited, although welcomed by the Morolicans. Material donations were more frequent during the first months after Morolica's destruction, although they continued throughout the relocation process.

Even though the material resources provided by the donors potentially benefited all household members, they were perceived as more directly related to women's traditional responsibility for household care-taking. Women, the usual recipients of most of these donations, were in change of distributing the items among their family members. Some important assistance also arrived in the form of tents and construction materials. These resources were administered by the all-male Reconstruction Committee. Setting up the tents where Morolicans lived for approximately two months, and building the shacks where they stayed until they relocated to Nueva Morolica in March of 2000, were primarily male activities. Most of these material donations are examples of the so-called welfare approach to development. As previously discussed, the welfare approach considers women as a vulnerable group and as passive recipients of the assistance offered. Women's role as mothers is emphasized, with the consequent focus on the provision of goods such as food, water, medicines, toys, etc. This approach, considered politically safe, is the oldest and has been more widely used than the other approaches— equity, anti-poverty, efficiency, empowerment (Andersen 1992:175). The initial assistance provided to Morolica through these interventions addressed the most urgent practical needs, at least partially—that is, needs related to women's traditional responsibility for much of the work in the household. Strategic needs—those resulting from women's structural subordination in society—on the other hand, were ignored and

women's and men's traditional roles were not questioned. The emphasis on practical gender needs that characterized these initial interventions might have contributed to the reestablishment of traditional gender relations during the early emergency stages that followed the disaster. On the other hand, some of the later projects discussed below did attempt to enhance women's self-determination. Longitudinal studies of the situation in Morolica would clarify wether these projects actually succeeded in addressing women's strategic needs in the long run.

The most significant programs implemented in Morolica were the Program Nueva Morolica, the Economic Reactivation Program, the *Merienda Escolar* (School Meal) Program, and the Micro-credit program.

The "Program Nueva Morolica" focused exclusively on the physical relocation and reconstruction of the community. It was funded by Malteser, and CAM/ASIECAH, with the participation of the United Nations World Food Programme. It was coordinated by a committee headed by the mayor of Morolica and composed of Morolica's Reconstruction Committee, and delegates from Malteser, CAM/ASIECAH and AMHON, which was established soon after the disaster. Thanks to the "Program Nueva Morolica" every single family in the community was given a house. In fact there are 24 more houses in Nueva Morolica than there were in Antigua Morolica, with a total of 312 houses in the new community. All of these additional 24 houses were assigned to single mothers, or to widows who rented or lived with relatives before Mitch. In the case of married couples, property titles were written in the name of both spouses, not just on the husband's name as it was customary. Single males were not given a house unless they had one prior to the

hurricane; single mothers, on the other hand, were given a house in their name. This was done at the insistence of Malteser, the German Catholic Humanitarian Agency.

Both males and females expressed agreement with this practice to me, but a number of single mothers confided that this clause had created conflicts with their male partners who did not receive a house. Furthermore, while many women reported that everyone getting a house was one of the best features of Nueva Morolica, this aspect was not mentioned by any of the men.

The "Program Nueva Morolica" was designed as a "work for food" project by the World Food Programme. One member of each family was required to work at the construction site for 5 hours a day, three days a week until the completion of the project. The usual pattern was for the males to work in construction and for the women to bring food during the breakfast and lunch breaks. Single mothers, either worked themselves, enlisted the help of a male relative or, on rare occasions, paid someone to do their work. Each worker received minimum wages plus enough food (rice, corn, beans, oil and sometimes canned fish) to feed the entire family. The provision of food on the part of the World Food Program's was crucial for the successful completion of the project. The amount of food received was calculated according the number of family members. For a typical family of over five members, the monthly assignment consisted of: 100 pounds of corn; 50 pounds of beans; 50 pounds of rice, 1 gallon of soy oil; 3 pounds of sugar, 2 pounds of pasta, and one pound of tomato sauce. Most males kept the money for their own personal expenses and gave the food to the women to feed the entire family.

During the almost 16 months it took for Nueva Morolica to be built, the reconstruction of the community was equated with the building of the houses. Women's

and men's participation in the project was determined by the process of "role carryover" (Forrest 1978) that assigns childcare, food preparation and supportive tasks to women, while men occupy leadership positions and/or perform jobs that require greater physical strength. Morolican women, for the most part, did not take an active role in construction work beyond making the meals and taking them to the workers twice a day—not a small feat considering the distance to the new site, the steepness of the slopes they had to walk, and the extremely hot temperatures. While the men were at the construction site, women stayed in El Tejar, struggling with the many hardships of life in the shantytown. It has been noted that, in disaster situations, women often do the "unheralded clean-up duty" at home, and that their efforts receive no media attention, and remain largely unrecognized (Dull 1994; Dobson 1994). Morolican women often complained that, although their workload had increased dramatically after Mitch, they did not get any recognition—they were not reconstructing the community—nor did they get a salary for their extra work. Still, the knowledge that they would soon have a new home—and that it would be in their name, not just in their husband's name as was the customary pattern—was frequently mentioned as a cause for rejoicing.

Both Malteser, CAM/ASIECAH, and AMHON authorities frequently expressed their faith in the program as some kind of "equalizing mechanism": a house for everyone; everyone the same kind of house. Streets in Nueva Morolica had no names. The houses, all of them identical, were identified only by numbers painted on the walls. When I left Morolica less than 4 months after people had moved to their new homes, the families that could afford it had already built extensions to the original houses. Many had planted gardens with flowers. Almost everyone had painted their doors and windows in

various colors, carefully choosing shades different from their neighbors'. Many commented that these modifications helped them turn the impersonal house that had been assigned to them—there was a drawing a few weeks prior to the relocation—into *their* home.

Disaster researchers have reported that the inter-group food-sharing, solidarity and altruism that characterizes the emergency phase is frequently replaced by renewed factionalism during the shift from relief to reconstruction (Oliver-Smith 1986). Conflict and hostility do not appear to have characterized the relocation process in Morolica. Social differentiation, and an emphasis on individual expression, however, were immediately manifested in the new community, and could be viewed as a form of identity construction.

Another significant program implemented in Nueva Morolica was known as the Economic Reactivation Program, designed and funded by OXFAM International. In spite of its promising title, this project was limited to raising hens for egg production. In fact, it was popularly known as "*El proyecto de las gallinas*" or the Chicken Project. By OXFAM mandate, only females were allowed to participate, allegedly in an effort to integrate women in economic activities. The program started in December 1999. At that time a large number of women—no precise records were kept—expressed an interest in participating and attended the weekly meetings. By the summer of 2000 only 15 women remained as members of the project. They were all married and, with the exception of three of them whose husbands were members of the Municipal Council, were among the poorest members of the community. They received training in every aspect of chicken raising, from the construction of the barn, to medical care of the hens, to basic accounting

and record keeping. Eggs were sold to Morolican families, as well as to *pulperías*, both in Morolica and the neighboring hamlets. Profits, about 30 dollars a month for the entire group, were deposited in a bank account opened by the group. By the time I left the field, no decision had been made as to how to invest that money. This project was a constant source of conflict between many of the participating women and their husbands. The males complained that women were neglecting their household responsibilities. Women believed that the main issue was their control of the money, which defied the societal dictum that only males should handle finances. One woman justified her continued participation in the program by saying: "I have always fought with my husband; at least now I have a valid reason to fight for". This project, with its exclusive focus on the productive role of women and the need to provide them with better, if limited, access to productive resources, appeared to have been conceived as an anti-poverty type of intervention (Andersen 1992:173-175).

It is difficult to evaluate the impact that this project was having on the participating women, especially since it had only been in place for a few months by the time I finished my research. It did provide women with some potentially useful organizational, money handling, accounting and leadership skills. The economic profits, however, were negligible, a fact that was recognized by the women themselves. Most participants confided that the project they were really interested in was the Micro-credit program I will describe next, which promised to be more profitable than the Chicken Project. Requirements to participate in the Micro-credit project included having some basic accounting skills, and having successfully participated in a previous program. In

other words, participation in the Chicken Project was regarded by most women as a first step towards a more ambitious objective.

The Micro-credit program was the only project being implemented by a Honduran government agency: The PRAF, *Programa de Ayuda Familiar* (Program of Assistance to the Families). The PRAF functioned at the national level. It had been created by an Executive Agreement on July 17, 1990 as a compensatory measure intended to help the poorest sectors of the Honduran population deal with the effects of the *Nuevo Programa de Ajuste Estructural* (New Program of Structural Adjustment) that came into effect that same year. Prior to Mitch the PRAF had been implementing 6 different programs:

- Bonus for first-, second-, and third-grade children (*Bono Escolar I*).

- Bonus for fourth-grade children (*Bono Escolar II*).

- Mother-child bonus (*Bono Materno Infantil*).

- Senior Citizen Bonus (*Bono Tercera Edad*)

- School Bag (*Bolsón Escolar*).

- Sub-program for the Integral Development of Women *(Subprograma de Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer)*.

In 1999, Morolica and Choluteca Capital—the Capital of the Department of Choluteca—were the only two Municipalities in the Department of Choluteca—of a total of 16 Municipalities—to have been targeted as beneficiaries of all 6 sub-programs of the PRAF (PRAF 1999).

The *"Bono Escolar I"*, consisted of a monthly allowance assigned to families whose monthly income did not exceed 600 Lempiras a month (around US $43), and who had children in first, second or third grade. Qualifying families received 50 Lempiras (less than US $6 dollars) a month per child, up to three children, during the 10 months of

the academic year. Following PRAF's specifications, this money was handed to the mother of the family, who in turn handed it over to the father, since customary practice in Morolica dictated that finances be handled by males. A total of 216 families in the Municipality of Morolica received this bonus in 1999 (PRAF 1999).

The *"Bono Escolar II"* was an extension of the previous program. Requirements and benefits were also the same, except that it included families with children in fourth grade. The number of families in Morolica who received this bonus in 1999 was 97 (PRAF 1999).

The *"Bono Materno Infantil"* targeted pregnant and nursing women, and families with children under 5, or with children under 18 with disabilities. Qualifying families— those whose monthly income did not exceed 600 Lempiras a month (around US $43)— received a bonus of 50 Lempiras a month (less than US $6) per beneficiary, up to 3 beneficiaries per family, for as long as they qualified. A total of 1,127 beneficiaries in the Municipality of Morolica received this Bonus in 1999 (PRAF 1999).

To qualify for the *"Bono Tercera Edad"* beneficiaries had to be over 65 and have an income that did not exceed 400 Lempiras a month (approximately US $30). A total of 303 individuals received this Bonus in 1999 in the Municipality of Morolica (PRAF 1999).

The *"Bolsón Escolar"* consisted of a school bag containing school materials, one per child enrolled in third, second or third grade, per academic year. In the Municipality of Morolica, a total of 550 children received a school bag in 1999 (PRAF 1999).

A document detailing the PRAF's mandate and activities describes very ambitious—and unrealistic—objectives for each of the programs implemented. The less

than 6 dollars a month provided by the *"Bono Escolar"* programs, for instance, could not go very far towards "improving the nutritional status, contributing to the food security, and reducing the poverty of the beneficiary families", as well as "ensuring increasing enrollment ratios, and decreasing school absenteeism" among school-aged children, which were its intended objectives. Similarly, the school bag children received through the *"Bolsón Escolar"* program could not realistically "create conditions of educational equality in Honduras" by itself, as the PRAF seemed to expect (PRAF 1999a; 1999b). It is also important to note that success was defined in terms of increasing numbers of beneficiaries; no follow up projects were planned to investigate how the allowances were used, or the impact of the programs on the target population.

The Micro-Credit program implemented in the town of Morolica was part of PRAF's *Subprograma de Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer* (Sub-program for the Integral Development of Women). As the name indicates, this project targeted only females. This was justified on the premise that women tend to have better repayment rates than men-a fact that is commonly accepted among development practitioners (UN 1989:104). Projects were primarily funded by the Central American Bank. Although different credit modalities with different requirements and conditions were available, their main feature was that they enabled women to obtain loans without providing collateral. In Morolica, PRAF officers visited the community and interviewed the applicants, who had to show a clear idea of what they intended to do with the money. Those women who qualified received an initial loan of 2000 Lempiras to be returned in 6 to 9 months—plus an interest of 18%. Upon successful return of the first loan women could apply for a larger amount, up to 15,000 Lempiras. The interest for loans over 4,500 Lempiras increased to

25%. In all cases the money borrowed was being used to travel to Tegucigalpa, purchase goods, usually clothing, and reselling them in Morolica and neighboring hamlets at a higher price. In the summer of 2000 there were 34 participants, divided in two groups of 15 and 19. All of them had just received their first loan. Interestingly, most of the women participating in this project were single mothers, with or without a stable partner. Many men expressed disapproval at women's making business trips to Tegucigalpa—family visits were more acceptable. It is not possible to travel to Tegucigalpa by bus and return to Morolica on the same day. Overnighting in Tegucigalpa was considered unacceptable behavior for a married woman; it also reduced the profits. However, since the Morolica-Choluteca road had just been repaired in July 2000, women expected to increase their profits soon. The Micro-Credit Program focused more on the economic development of the community that on the women themselves. Their increased participation in economic activity was expected to compensate for the reduction of social spending that went along the economic crisis. This program was as example of the efficiency approach to humanitarian interventions.

As mentioned above, many women in the Chicken Project hoped to eventually be able to participate in the Micro-Credit Program, which was perceived as more prestigious and more economically profitable. Their relationship with their husbands was already conflict-ridden as a result of their participation in the Chicken Project. Tensions might intensify with women's involvement in commerce, an activity that defied gender expectations by requiring women to travel and handle relatively large amounts of money on their own.

Merienda Escolar (school meal) was a project implemented by the World Food Programme. This agency donated enough rice, beans, corn, powdered milk, sugar and other foodstuffs to feed a *merienda* (meal) a day to all Morolican school children since Nueva Morolica was inaugurated. Schoolteachers drew up a schedule so that every mother would cook a meal for all school children, once a week for every child they had in school. The average number of children per family in Morolica was five. Therefore, most women were required to cook several times a week. The mothers collected the ingredients the day before, delivered the cooked meal on the appointed day, and the teachers, all of them female but one, handed out the meal to the children during the lunch break. Most women complained about the extra work, yet they were grateful to the program, since they were able to use the money they saved on food, or other items for the household. In this case no complaint was heard from the males, since this project was perceived as an extension of women's traditional responsibilities. Still, a small number of males responded to this program by reducing the allowance they gave to their wives. The *Merienda Escolar* Program, as it is the case with interventions inspired by the welfare approach, reinforced women's role as caregivers and focused on meeting the nutritional needs of children.

I would like to emphasize that I did not choose to focus on projects that targeted women. With the exception on the physical reconstruction of the community, in which both women and men participated, the other programs implemented targeted only women. Most of these projects generally reinforced women's traditional responsibility for much of the work in the household. The *Merienda Escolar* Project is a case in point. The Chicken Project provided women with some potentially useful organizational,

money handling, accounting and leadership skills. These, however, were side-effects of participation in the program, rather than its primary objective. Women's increased self-confidence was tempered by the negligible economic profits achieved through their efforts. The Program Nueva Morolica, on the other hand challenged male-biased customary house ownership practices and did aim at a redistribution of power, at least as far as access to housing was concerned. It was however too limited on its own to make women more active players in society. These projects met some of women's most immediate practical needs. Some of them also aimed at enhancing women's self-determination and improving their access to productive resources. However, enhancing women's resilience to future disasters will not be accomplished unless women's subordination in Honduran society is effectively challenged.

At the completion of this research, no program was addressing the need to reestablish the economic viability and self-sufficiency of the community as a whole, which was a major source of concern for Morolicans. The phrase "*de qué vamos a vivir cuando se vayan todos*" (how will we live when they all [the agencies] leave) was frequently uttered by concerned Morolicans.

Post-Relocation Livelihood Strategies

As defined by Chambers and Conway (1992:7-8) livelihood strategies refer to the capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable—that is, it results in increased resilience—when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base or the livelihood opportunities for the next generation. Livelihood strategies are further subdivided into

coping strategies—short-term responses to acute shocks—and adaptive strategies, which entail long-term changes in behavior patterns as a result of acute shocks or chronic stresses. Only longitudinal studies that trace the conditions of a population over time can adequately determine whether people's immediate responses to a crisis ultimately become well-established adaptive strategies. Long-term studies are also necessary to assess whether these strategies result in sustainable livelihoods that are resilient and capable of overcoming present and future stresses and shocks. Some of the changes in the livelihood strategies adopted by the Morolican population I document in this dissertation are indeed very recent, which makes it difficult to suggest long-term predictions as to whether they will become entrenched features of Morolican community life. In any case, an examination of these responses offers interesting insights into the behavior of women and men facing the challenges of rebuilding their lives during the little studied reconstruction stages.

Boserup (1965) concluded that, historically, the response of peasants to declining income in situations of economic scarcity has been to intensify existing forms of production. In Morolica, however, the pursuit of most Pre-Mitch forms of production was made impossible by the massive destruction caused by the hurricane. Post-Mitch livelihood strategies in Morolica can be better described as economic diversification—combining the assistance provided by the many humanitarian agencies working in the area with a complex array of economic activities (DeVries 2000).

As discussed in the previous section, males were paid a salary for their work aon the construction project. Only a few women worked at the construction site. For months this was the only source of income available to most Morolicans. The usual pattern was

for the men to keep that money for their own expenses. This appeared to be the usual arrangement in Morolica, even before the hurricane. I was told that most husbands, either assigned a small weekly allowance to their wives—usually just enough to take care of the daily household needs—or simply made arrangements with the *pulperías* so that their wives could purchase groceries up to a certain value, but without actually handling any cash themselves. This practice was more common among the lower economic classes, and was even more prevalent when the women did not work outside the home. Men justified their insistence in keeping the money they made at the construction project by arguing that women were already getting food, medicines and other resources from the World Food Programme, and from donations from the many other humanitarian groups. In response, women attempted to meet their limited monetary expenses by washing and mending clothes for wealthier households, making and selling *tortillas*, cheese and *rosquillas*– a strategy that occasionally backfired, since men sometimes insisted on keeping that money too—and cooking and serving meals to the workers from the humanitarian agencies or religious groups that frequently visited Morolica. Opportunities to engage in these activities were only available on a very irregular basis, and did not constitute a reliable source of cash. The *Merienda Escolar* Program previously discussed was aimed at improving the nutritional status of the Morolican children, as well as providing an incentive for parents to send their children to school. Only the Economic Reactivation Project and the Micro-credit Program had been conceived as income-generating programs for women. The economic self-sufficiency of the participants was clearly not a likely result of the Economic Reactivation, or "chicken project". The Micro-credit project seemed more promising, at least in the eyes of the participating women.

In the summer of 2000 life in Nueva Morolica still revolved around construction projects that attempted to make the recently inaugurated town a more comfortable and habitable place for everyone. Latrines, kitchens, electricity, piped-in water, paved streets, landfill, cemetery and Catholic church were some of the most immediate projects. People had only been living in Nueva Morolica for a few months, but they already had some very clear hopes and expectations, as well as some very definite ideas on what they liked and did not like about their new community. In this section I explore some of these notions in an attempt to gain insights into the potential success or failure of Morolica as a relocated community.

Figure 7-1. Intended Occupation in Nueva Morolica (Women). Source: Own data.

Approximately 36 percent of the female population chose "housework" as their intended occupation in Nueva Morolica, which was taken to mean that they did not expect to be engaged in income-generating activities. Approximately 50 percent of the women interviewed reported that they were not engaged in any form of income-generating activity prior to Mitch. Women's increased interest in these types of activities can be interpreted as a response to an expected deterioration in the economic conditions of the community as a whole. With fewer economic opportunities available to the males,

women might feel compelled to take a more direct contribution to the household economy. It could also be a result of the expansion in the opportunities available to women, as exemplified by the Micro-credit, and Economic Reactivation project previously discussed, which targeted only women. Ideological consideration could also be an important factor. Approximately 70 percent of the women participating in the Micro-credit project were Evangelical. Evangelical dogma institutionalizes the subordination of women to their husbands. However, most of the women participating in this project were single mothers, with or without a stable partner, and did not therefore feel subject to a husband's authority. In fact, they all expressed their intention to keep the profits they made in their economic ventures. Evangelism, with its emphasis on individual improvements and rejection of expensive "vices", has been associated with upward mobility. Commerce was chosen by 30 percent of women, a marked increased compared to the 14 percent who listed commerce as their income generating activity before Mitch. Skilled labor—mainly referring to teachers, nurses, and secretaries—however, was only chosen by 19 percent of the women, as opposed to 30 percent before the Hurricane. Some of the single mothers who did not own a house prior to Mitch had been employed by the Municipality. These women received less than minimum wages, and their employment was seen almost as a kind of "welfare" measure. The security and independence gained by owning their own house in Nueva Morolica seemed to have encouraged them to try their luck at potentially more profitable enterprises, like commerce. The category of "other" included the sale of home-made food and handicrafts, an occupation considered as different from commerce, which involved purchasing goods in Tegucigalpa or Choluteca to be resold in Morolica. This category did

not reflect major changes, comparing pre- and after-relocation figures. Similarly,

participation in agriculture/livestock production remained the least favored option by
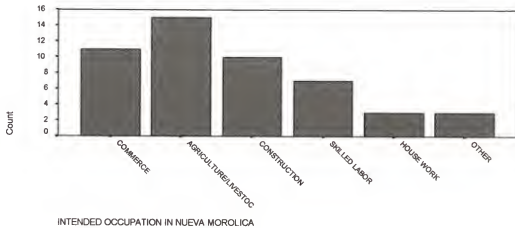
women.

INTENDED OCCUPATION IN NUEVA MOROLICA

Figure 7-2. Intended Occupation In Nueva Morolica (Men). Source: Own data.

Regarding intended occupations for males, agricultural/livestock production was

the most frequently mentioned activity both before Mitch and after the relocation (31.3

percent versus 22.4 percent). Commerce was a primary income generating activity for

only 8.2 percent of males before Mitch. However, almost 23 percent of the men reported

commerce as their intended activity in Nueva Morolica. Although the reasons for this

difference are not entirely clear, it is interesting to note men's frequent comment that "if

women can do it, we can do it to". This has important implications for the potential

success of women's commercial ventures. Only women received assistance through the

Micro-credit program. However, their lack of familiarity with basic accounting, banking

and marketing procedures might put them at a clear disadvantage if they found

themselves competing with the men. Interest in construction work among males also

increased significantly after the relocation. It was so rarely mentioned as a pre-Mitch

income-generating activity that I included it in the "non-agricultural wage labor"

category. Obviously, construction work would be readily available in Nueva Morolica, at least at the beginning. Almost 21 percent of males intended to work in construction projects. Skilled labor was mentioned by 14.6 percent of the men. It is hard to make pre- and post- comparisons regarding this category since construction work was included in it in the pre-Mitch data but constituted a separate category after the relocation. Interestingly, 6.3 percent of males declared that they intended to occupy their days doing housework. This was not mentioned by any men regarding their pre-Mitch occupation.

My data shows some significant changes in the attitudes and economic behavior of the women and men of Morolica after Mitch, and particularly after the relocation. Since my post-relocation data reflects "intended occupations", it is difficult to determine what the actual situation will turn out to be as Nueva Morolica progresses through the "potential development" and, hopefully, "integration" stages described by Scudder and Colson (1982). Innovation, economic diversification and the increased participation of women in economic activities appear as plausible tendencies.

Because this research was completed three months after the people had relocated to their new community, it was still very early to evaluate the success of failure of Nueva Morolica as a settlement with any degree of certainty. However, some of the indicators proposed by Coburn *et al.* (1984) regarding the degree of commitment to permanence in the relocated community, and Oliver-Smith (1991) stressing satisfaction with the new site, layout, and housing, and popular participation in the relocation project were already very apparent. As previously discussed, popular participation was maximized in the planning and construction of Nueva Morolica. Although the new houses were significantly smaller than the dwellings in the lost town, the plots on which they were

located did allow for future expansion. When I left Nueva Morolica in July of 2000, most families were busy planting gardens, setting partitions in their one-room houses, and building extensions to their new homes.

While it seems reasonable to assume that insights into the potential success of a settlement can be gained by examining whether its inhabitants are pleased or displeased with its main features, current approaches do not seem to have considered the possibility that women and men may have different criteria for assessing the acceptability of a relocated community. Figures 7-3 and 7-4 compare the most and least liked features about Nueva Morolica for females and males.
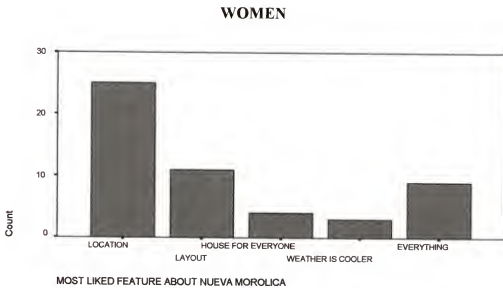
WOMEN

MOST LIKED FEATURE ABOUT NUEVA MOROLICA

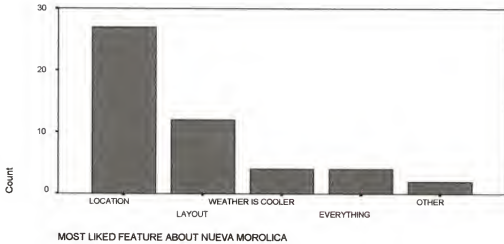Figure 7-3. Most liked Feature About Nueva Morolica Reported by Women. Source: Own data.

MEN

Figure 7-4. Most liked Feature About Nueva Morolica Reported by Men. Source: Own
   data.

Clearly, the location seems to be the most important factor for both females and
males. Nor surprisingly, females were very pleased with the fact that everyone received a
house. As mentioned in the previous section, this was part of the conditions proposed by
Malteser, and it benefited primarily females, particularly single mothers and homeless
widows. No single male mentioned this factor as something they liked about Nueva
Morolica. Women often expressed especially strong ties to their homes, reflecting the
gendered division of labor and the material grounding of women's lives in the domestic
realm. Consequently, women also experienced the loss of their homes and household
possessions more acutely. They recalled their destroyed homes as sites rich with fond
memories of babies being born, gardens being tended, and family gatherings taking place.
For women, getting a new home was an important component of their emotional, as much
as their material, recovery.

WOMEN
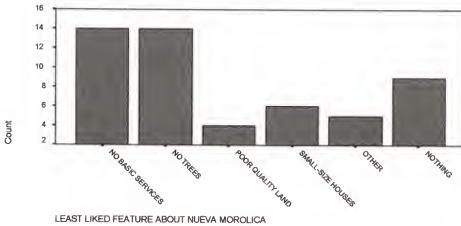
Figure 7-5. Least liked figure about Nueva Morolica Reported by Women. Source: Own data.
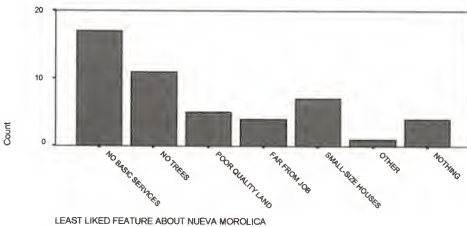
MEN

Figure 7-6. Least liked figure about Nueva Morolica Reported by Men. Source: Own data.

The layout of the new community—straight streets on a grid pattern— was also frequently mentioned by both genders as one of the most liked features, followed by the cooler weather. Women, in general seemed to be more satisfied with the new community,

and 17.3 percent said that they liked everything about it. Only 8.2 percent of men reported liking everything about Nueva Morolica.

The lack of basic services and the absence of trees were the least liked features about Nueva Morolica, as reported by both females and males, followed by the small-size of the houses. In the summer of 2000 construction work was underway to build latrines and have water piped in from a well close to the location of Antigua Morolica. Morolicans commented with pride that they would soon be drinking the same water they use to drink in their old community. Electricity presented a bigger problem. Choluteca was the only potential source of electric power. The road from Choluteca to Morolica remained unrepaired until July 2000. Even then it was still impassable for the heavy construction trucks that would have been required to undertake the necessary construction work. In any case, Providing Morolica with electric power did not seem to have been a priority for the Honduran authorities. Regarding the lack of trees, a proposal for a reforestation project had been submitted to several development agencies. Measuring roughly 13 by 16 feet, houses in Nueva Morolica were undeniably small, but many neighbors were in the process of building extensions. It is also important to note that 18 percent of the women, and 8.5 percent of the men reported that there was nothing about Nueva Morolica that they did not like. It would appear that the chances of Nueva Morolica of becoming a successful settlement were rather good, at least regarding people's satisfaction with its basic features.
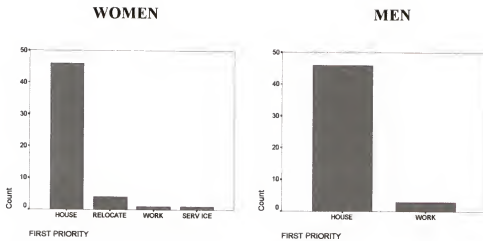
WOMEN **MEN**

Figure 7-7. Prioritization of needs. Source: Own data

In December 1999, 4 months before the relocation to Nueva Morolica, I collected data on people's priorities with regards to their soon-to-be new community. Not surprisingly, the large majority of both women and men agreed that getting a new house was their first priority. It is rather baffling, however, that so few of the women—and none of the men—mentioned relocation to a safer place as one of their priorities. Geological and hydrological studies carried out on the new site confirmed that the location chosen to build Nueva Morolica was very unlikely to ever be affected by a flood like the one that destroyed the old town. Until people relocated to the new community, however, they lived in El Tejar, in an area that did suffer serious damage during Mitch. In fact, during the 1999 wet season, torrential rains damaged several shacks and completely destroyed a bridge that connected El Tejar with Nueva Morolica. Access to Nueva Morolica from El Tejar was impossible for days, which delayed work at the construction site. It was rather disappointing to witness people's fatalistic resignation to accept "God's designs" to send them another catastrophe, if that was His will. While Evangelicals believed that they, as good Christians, would be spared from further tragedy, Catholics said that "*Dios dirá*" (it

will be God's will). Whatever people's justification for their apparent lack of interest in disaster preparedness measures, the fact is that disaster mitigation was never part of the reconstruction discourse. The implications of these factors for the future resilience or vulnerability of Nueva Morolica are discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

Summary

The pursuit of most Pre-Mitch forms of production, described in Chapter 4, was made impossible by the massive destruction caused by the hurricane. Post-Mitch livelihood strategies in Morolica were a combination of the assistance provided by the humanitarian agencies working in the area with a complex array of economic activities.

Almost every humanitarian agency working in Honduras also had a project in Morolica. Most of the initial assistance consisted of donations of food, medicines, toys, school materials and so forth. The most significant programs implemented in Morolica were the Program Nueva Morolica, which focused exclusively on the physical relocation of the community; the Economic Reactivation Program, which involved raising hens for egg production; the School Meal Project, which provided one daily meal to Morolican school children; and the Micro-credit program, which enabled women to obtain loans without providing collateral.

Data shows some noticeable changes in the attitudes and economic behavior of the women and men of Morolica after Mitch. Construction work was the most common occupation for males after the disaster. Only a few women worked at the construction site. Washing and mending clothes for wealthier households, making and selling *tortillas*, cheese and *rosquillas* and cooking and serving meals to visiting relief workers were some

of the limited income-generating activities available to women. Regarding "intended occupation" in Nueva Morolica, the most noticeable departure from pre-disaster conditions was a significant increase in the number of women who expected to be engaged in income-generating activities. The number of individuals, both females and males, that chose commerce as their intended occupation in Nueva Morolica was also significantly higher than was the case for pre-Mitch figures.

The changes documented in this dissertation are perhaps too recent to determine whether people's immediate responses to the disaster ultimately become well-established strategies. Innovation, economic diversification and the increased participation of women in economic activities appear as plausible tendencies.

CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSIONS: VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

This chapter presents my concluding remarks on the vulnerability and resilience

of Morolica in the context of the extreme poverty, social inequality and environmental

degradation that characterized Honduras even before Mitch. I first discuss the many

challenges for reconstruction and development facing the country. These challenges stem

not only from the conditions of extreme underdevelopment previously mentioned, but

also from a lack of what has been called in Honduras a "*cultura de prevención*", or

culture of prevention. I then summarize the lessons learned through my study of the

community of Morolica, emphasizing the role of the gendered political economic factors

that acted as root causes of the disaster—that is, the basis of their vulnerability—as well

as those aspects that, on the other hand, might contribute to the increased resilience of the

community. This dissertation concludes with some recommendations that can help

researchers and policymakers be more aware of the complex interactions of the factors

that characterize post-disaster relocation.

The Challenges for Reconstruction and Development

Before the Hurricane, two thirds of the Honduran population were living below

the poverty line, while about half were living in extreme poverty. As it swept across the

Honduran landscape, the exceptional size, power and duration of Hurricane Mitch

abruptly and brutally altered the already diminished economic, social and environmental

conditions of its people. As a result of the enormous damage caused by the storm,

poverty in Honduras is undoubtedly worse than it was. The damage had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable segment of the Honduran population—the poorest people. Moreover, this catastrophe exposed Honduras's high level of national vulnerability due to, among other factors, inadequate and inappropriate development schemes, irrational, uncontrolled use and occupation of the land, and the location, design and construction of infrastructure, both public and private, without any environmental considerations or risk analysis.

Table 8-1. Human Development Index. Honduras 1997-2000.

	1997	1998	1999	2000 Projections
Choluteca	0.529	0.525	0.524	(0.531)
Honduras	0.551	0.550	0.544	(0.551)

Source: UNDP 1999

It has been estimated that the segment of the Honduran population with a low human development index (HDI) increased from 22% to 32% (1,939,210 people) as a result of the socio-economic impact of Hurricane Mitch (UN 1999:15). Table 8-1 shows that the Department of Choluteca is significantly below national average levels of human development, as measured by the Human Development Index. It also shows a general decline for 1998, the year that Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras. In 1999, human development levels were still significantly lower than pre-Mitch levels. At the time this research was completed, in July 2000, data for the year 2000 had not been analyzed yet. Nevertheless, projections made by the UNDP in 1999 indicate that pre-Mitch levels would be reached for the country as a whole by then. It is interesting to note that the most underdeveloped Departments—Copán, El Paraíso, Ocotepeque and Lempira—were experiencing higher rates of recovery, as a result of increased investment on their

education and health sectors on the part that humanitarian agencies. Indicators for Francisco Morazán, the department where Tegucigalpa is located, are not expected to reach pre-Mitch levels until 2002. This is not to imply that Hurricane Mitch might have acted as a form of development equalizing mechanism in Honduras. Even at its lowest level in 1999, Francisco Morazán had an HDI of 0.648, higher than anywhere else in the country (UNDP 1999:19). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that increased attention to Honduras' problems—such as insufficient access to education or healthcare—on the part of the international humanitarian community shows encouraging signs of having a positive effect on the human development of the country.

The scale of the loss of life, devastation and ruin resulting from a natural phenomenon such as Hurricane Mitch in Honduras was clearly exacerbated by human-made factors. These factors include the social inequality, extreme poverty, degradation of the environment, and restricted access to economic and social opportunities that characterize Honduras. The socio-political, economic and environmental agenda upon which Honduras embarks in the twenty first century will decrease the vulnerability of the region only if transformation accompanies reconstruction. These three agendas are mutually reinforcing.

Meeting the challenges facing Honduras calls for a series of actions at the national and regional level. The Honduran democratic system is still not fully consolidated and needs to be strengthened. The country requires strategies to encourage much greater participation by the population in decision-making and in decentralization efforts, and the establishment and maintenance of basic human rights.

In November 1990, a special law was passed institutionalizing the decentralization process. This law established that 5 percent of the national tax revenue should be distributed among the different municipalities (UNDP 1999:26). Unfortunately, transfer of this funding was plagued by constant problems and delays, which seriously hampered the effective functioning of municipal governments. The Washington Post, in a front-page feature (April 19, 1999), described how the mayor of Morolica "put [the] town back on the map" by mobilizing national and international resources, together with self-help, to help rebuild his devastated community. The case of Morolica illustrates how, in times of emergency, local governments, headed by their mayors, can provide critical leadership in decisions regarding disaster mitigation and/or post-disaster reconstruction. Their intimate knowledge of local resources, local needs and other community factors provide them with insights and capacity for making sounder and more timely judgments than centralized governments. Their physical proximity to the community gives local governments a better capability to determine local interests and requirements. Citizens look to their elected local officials for immediate disaster response, regardless of the financial capacities of the municipalities. It is clear that the decentralization process needs to be accompanied by a corresponding sufficient allocation of resources to the municipal, local and community levels in order to strengthen the capacity of local leaders. The potential comparative advantage that local governments have in responding to citizen's needs and mobilizing and allocating wisely goes well beyond immediate disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts. Local governments with strengthened capabilities are better positioned to address problems of food insecurity and insufficient access to healthcare, education, and basic services, therefore increasing the resilience of

the population to future disaster events. On the other hand, it can also be argued that local authorities are often subject to pressures from the local elites who have vested interests in preserving the *status quo ante*, and could potentially manipulate assistance in a way that further discriminates against marginalized groups. This serious possibility underscores the need to strengthen local organizations—including women's organizations—in order to encourage the participation of all sectors of the population in decision-making.

Overcoming poverty and exclusion and providing social benefits and economic opportunities for all citizens are vital to reducing social vulnerability to disasters. In order to alleviate the high poverty levels that characterize most of Honduras, economic policies should be aimed at improving the country's productive sectors. Economic analysts recommend increasing the volume and range of national exports. However, overemphasis on export agriculture has led to acute food shortages in the past, as well as increased social inequality and environmental degradation (Stonich 1993). It is important to find mechanisms to balance economic growth with strategies to ensure food security, access to opportunities by marginal sectors such as rural women and members of ethnic groups, and sustainable natural resource management. It is also necessary, however, to reduce the impact of Honduras's large external debt, the interest on which consumes a high percentage of the nation's resources. In 1999, external debt servicing exceeded 110 percent of the country's GDP (UN 1999:12). This severely hinders investment in health, education, efforts to combat poverty, needed economic development and other important programs.

Regarding environmental concerns, the focus should be on reducing the impact of natural phenomena such as Hurricane Mitch on the population. A comprehensive

assessment of existing and potential environmental risks to humans and the formulation and implementation of a plan to manage and minimize these risks should receive priority attention. So should programs to prevent floods through the management of watershed basins, to protect and strengthen riverbanks, and to build infrastructures that are resistant to floods. Additionally, there is a need for strengthened legal and institutional frameworks necessary for appropriate management of the environment and the sustainable use of natural resources. Environmental vulnerability can also be addressed through conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources, focusing especially on deforestation, fire prevention, inappropriate land use and inadequate management of water basins. A further issue is the imperative to find solutions for the dwellers of the squatter settlements in urban areas that are at high risk of damage from landslides and floods.

Hurricane Mitch underscored deficiencies in Honduras's ability to provide health care to its people. The strengthening of programs to prevent and control diseases, with particular attention to the mother-infant program, the development of national capacities for epidemiological control, and the reconstruction of damaged health infrastructure should all be priority areas. In addition, sanitation education must be improved and expanded, with an emphasis on preventing the transmission of communicable diseases—especially HIV/AIDS. Reducing vulnerability also requires attention to demographic trends, population policies, and access to information on reproductive health to reduce the pressure that rapid population growth place on the fixed amount of space available for habitation and cultivation.

The national Secretary of Education needs to support the integration of activities designed to transform education in Honduras and make it available to all. The international community could contribute by helping cover resource shortfall in the cost of reconstructing schools and of purchasing equipment, furniture, teaching texts and other materials.

Gender inequality is arguably one of the most serious obstacles towards increased resilience, since it places half of the population in serious conditions of social vulnerability. The leadership position of women in the reconstruction and national transformation processes needs to be strengthened. This should include promoting equitable access for women to education and health services. Some improvements have already been achieved in these areas, as evidenced by GDI and GEM data. More emphasis needs to be placed on promoting women's increased participation in the economic sectors by establishing new income-generating opportunities for women, organizing woman-operated micro companies, creating banks for women or other means of alleviating female poverty. Increased female participation in the labor force by itself is not sufficient; it might merely result in adding to women's already overburdened work schedule. The ultimate objective should be ensuring that women achieve and maintain a measure of access and control over the resources they generate, so as to increase their self-sufficiency.

While relief and reconstruction processes involved physical reconstruction of housing and other social infrastructure destroyed during the Hurricane, improving Honduras' resilience to similar or other threats demands new policies and programs that

address environmental problems, reach out to previously excluded groups, and extend to them the social benefits they require to enjoy full human development.

In conclusion, the success of post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction is much more than a matter of building and delivering houses. It is as much a matter of how that work is done. While it is evident that disaster victims do require significant material assistance, if the problems are conceived as exclusively material and technological—that is, "in terms of building dwellings that get people minimally sheltered as quickly as possible" (Oliver-Smith 1991:21)—the chances of reducing vulnerability to future events are greatly reduced. On the other hand, if post-disaster resettlement and reconstruction are approached as socio-cultural processes that encourage the participation and involvement of the population—women as well as men—the chances for increasing resiliency can be significantly enhanced (ibid.).

Lessons Learned in Nueva Morolica

This study was conceived as a search for a more holistic understanding of the interrelation among post-disaster recovery efforts, gender-differentiated vulnerability, and the local and larger political ecological structures in Morolica, as they developed in the little explored reconstruction stages. The objective of this research was to analyze the livelihood strategies adopted by the women and men of Morolica in their efforts to reconstruct their lives after their town was so devastated that relocation became the only viable option.

The most striking aspect of my fieldwork in Morolica was my appreciation of how disaster survivors under multiple stresses can display such resilience. It has been noted that "women are survivors from everyday crises and have to be resilient, but

disaster events can finally overwhelm their coping strategies" (Fordham 1999:15).
Indeed, I was particularly impressed by the resourcefulness of Morolican women, many
of whom were already stressed by poverty, and by discrimination directed toward them
before, during, and after the disaster. Yet, they managed not just to survive but, in many
cases, they became stronger and gained a more positive self-image through recognizing
their own abilities to cope. It is clearly inappropriate to refer to them as disaster
"victims".

Gender differentials were a central element of this study. Gender, as it intersects
with age and class, conditions the responsibilities and activities carried out by women and
men, and is a crucial factor determining people's position in society. In turn, people's
economic and political position in society determines their vulnerability to disasters and
other crises (Bryant and Bailey 1997:28-29). The concept of vulnerability is, in effect, a
fundamental element to the political ecology of disasters.

In Morolica, gender proved to be central to positioning both women and men vis-
à-vis the civilian and religious reconstruction and relocation authorities, and influenced
their access to the assistance provided. Every single one of the programs implemented
considered women and men differently. In fact, all of them attempted to favor women.
The motivations behind those differences, however, were very different. The Program
Nueva Morolica insisted that property titles to the houses be written in the name of both
spouses, not just in the husband's name as it was customary. This was also the practice
among the housing projects coordinated by IOM in Tegucigalpa and other urban centers.
Furthermore, Malteser also insisted that the additional houses they built be assigned to

single mothers and homeless widows. Notions of gender equality seemed to be the rational for these requirements.

Officers from the Chicken Project funded by Oxfam claimed that their program was gender-sensitive because it reflected local gender roles. Chicken raising in the *solares* was certainly considered a female activity. It was traditionally not envisioned as an income-generating activity, however, as the eggs produced were usually for household consumption. The sale of animals and agricultural products was an overwhelmingly male activity; men kept the profits made with the sale of these products. It is therefore not surprising that the husbands of the women participating in the Chicken Project expected to be able to handle the resulting benefits. Furthermore, women were never consulted on their preferences for the kind of project in which they wanted to participate. Project officers also claimed that their main objective was to help women get more integrated in the economy, which, I would argue, could hardly be achieved by having women participate in a program that barely produced any economic profit. The factors mentioned by women as the most important benefits of participating in the project—organizational, money handling, accounting and leadership skills, and higher chances of qualifying for the micro-credit project—were unintended consequences. OXFAM's Gender Manual is generally regarded as one of the best in the field of gender and development. It was disappointing to find out that the institution that produced such a manual funded a project that did not include gender or needs assessment analyses, had no clear indicators of success, and had not planned a follow up study to examine the impact of the project on the participants.

The *Merienda Escolar* program was intended to improve Morolican children's nutrition, and to provide incentives for the parents to send their children to school. Women did not benefit directly. In fact, the husbands of some of them reduced their allowance to compensate for the fact that less money was necessary to purchase groceries. The *Merienda Escolar* was an example of a project that, although targeted toward women, they were the participants but not the direct beneficiaries.

Micro-credit programs for women are a very common approach to integrating women in development projects. The fact that they tend to have better repayment rates than men is widely accepted (UN 1989:104). In other words, "efficiency" versus "equality" or "welfare" considerations were invoked to justify targeting women exclusively. This was the only program that had contemplated the notion of a success indicator in its design: timely loan repayment. The potential impacts on women's lives situation were never considered.

While the commitment and good intentions of the projects' officers were manifest, the cultural and gender contradictions embedded in Western development aid and humanitarian assistance plagued the projects themselves. The programs implemented in Morolica are examples of female-centered approaches that are already considered outmoded by many development theorists—although they continue to be resisted by practitioners who still formulate and implement development programs without any reference to women at all. Gender was not the only variable that determined people's participation in these programs, or the way they related to the many changes that took place in the aftermath of Mitch and the subsequent relocation of Morolica. Age, education, number of children, marital status and religious affiliation were some of the

other influential variables. This work explored the variability of human experience in Morolica by examining the interactions of gender with the other variables that determined people's position in society and shaped their levels of vulnerability or reliance. Gender issues, and gender-disaggregated data were integral elements of this analysis. As bell hooks has argued, gender discrimination "is of primary importance not because it is the basis of all other oppression, but because it is the practice of domination most people experience, whether their role be that of discriminator or discriminated against, exploiter or exploited" (1984:36). She further argues that "[u]nlike other forms of oppression, most people witness and/or experience the practice of sexist domination in family settings. We tend to witness and/or experience racism or classism as we encounter the larger society, the world outside the home" (ibid.:36). In effect, there are clear theoretical, ideological and pragmatic reasons for considering gender issues as critical aspects of a better understanding of social relations in any context, as illustrated by this study of Morolica. A better understanding of the gendered dimensions of post-disaster resettlement is an important step towards the difficult work of reconstructing human settlements and social relationships, and an essential move towards "rising from the ashes" (Anderson and Woodrow 1989).

The integration and cohesiveness of communities has been found to be conducive to their increased resilience to disasters (Berke *et al.* 1993). Women's and men's experiences as community workers and informal neighborhood leaders equips them to respond more efficiently to community crisis, which in turn might help mitigate the impact of future disasters. In Morolica, although 40 percent of women—versus 30 percent of men—reported belonging to a group or association, women were markedly

absent in the decision-making positions and leadership roles, as evidenced by their complete exclusion from the reconstruction committee. Oliver-Smith, in re-examining Glittenburg's 1982 study of post-disaster resettlement after the 1976 Guatemalan earthquake, concluded that "the high degree of participation in decision-making.....conferred both a sense of competence and proprietorship on the people" (1991:20). Encouraging female participation in decision-making would not only bring about a needed sense of personal and political empowerment for women; it would also increase the resilience of the entire community by ensuring that everyone's needs are being adequately met.

In this study of post-disaster relocation in Morolica religion emerged as an unanticipated but powerful catalyst for change. Religious systems are all-encompassing paradigms that shade the ways people perceive themselves, others and nature, not just their conceptions of God. "Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion" (White 1967:1204). Religion plays an important role in shaping both human-to-human, and human-to-environment relationships. Religion establishes a set of acceptable beliefs and behaviors and articulates a system of social and spiritual rewards for those who conform, and of negative sanctions for individuals or groups who deviate from what is religiously or socially permissible (ibid.). In other words, we cannot isolate spiritual, political, socio-economic, and ecological systems from one another. They are better understood as linked together, affecting and being affected by the way women and men think and act.

Few of the women—and none of the men—mentioned relocation to a safer place as one of their priorities. Most people, regardless of gender, age, class, or religious

affiliation expressed a fatalistic resignation to accept "God's designs" to send them another catastrophe, if that was His will. Morolican Evangelicals preached that the causes of the disaster were the corruption, evil vice, idolatry and disrespect for authority which, they claimed, characterized Morolica before Mitch. Passive fatalism was also part of Catholic's constructions of the disaster in their unquestioning acceptance of what they considered to be God's will. Whatever people's justification for their apparent lack of interest in disaster preparedness measures, the fact is that disaster mitigation was never part of the reconstruction discourse. By the time this research was completed no specific disaster mitigation measures were in place. While geological and hydrological studies conducted on the new site confirmed that it was unlikely that Morolica could ever be destroyed by a flood like one that destroyed Antigua Morolica, other potential sources of risk are conceivable—i.e. mudslides and landslides on the very eroded mountain slopes that surround Nueva Morolica. However, no emergency committees were organized, no evacuation procedures were practiced, no warning signals were agreed upon. This total lack of disaster preparedness potentially reduced Morolica's resilience to future hazards.

It is also worth noting the reasons why Morolica was singled out as the only community to be relocated in the entire country. Morolica was the only town to be completely destroyed by the Hurricane. However, although material losses were significant, only 12 individuals, of a total of 1,615 people, lost their lives in the tragedy. Many other communities in Honduras suffered much more devastating losses than Morolica. Arguably, the most distinctive feature of Morolica was the very active role played by its mayor. In effect, Morolica's mayor became a key figure in the events that culminated in the relocation of the new community. He had some knowledge of the

working of the international humanitarian agencies because of his experience as a regional coordinator for World Vision. The fact that he had been a student of a former resident of the community that happened to be involved with both World Vision and the Evangelical Churches helped him establish useful connections with the officers of many relief groups. His two-day odyssey from Morolica to the capital catapulted him into the media spotlight. Soon, the case of Morolica—frequently referred to as the "martyred town" by the media—became a popular cause in Honduras. Because of its popularity, as well as the logistical difficulties that resulted from the destruction of the roads that linked the town with the major urban centers, working in Morolica became both a challenge and a sign of prestige. In summary, Morolica become a symbol of Honduran reconstruction and received much more attention than other towns in the country. This, in turn, bolstered Morolicans' self-esteem and encouraged them to perceive themselves not as passive victims, but as active survivors determined to rebuild their lost town. As already discussed in the previous section, the case of Morolica clearly illustrates the need for strengthening the capabilities of local governments in Honduras. Ultimately, the success or failure of all the interventions that took place in Morolica in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch will be determined by their contribution to the increased well-being of the women and men of the new community.

Current Trends and Recommendations for the Future

A body of literature has been produced that clearly identifies the link between uncontrolled economic growth and natural disasters. It is maintained that, as unsustainable development has become more prevalent, the vulnerability of people has increased and the number of disasters has increased. "The dominant trends in

development, such as the transformation of natural resources into things, consumption patterns, urbanization, overuse of natural resources and use of environmentally harmful technologies, are directly responsible for creating natural disasters" (Bari 1998:125). It has been estimated that 90 percent of natural disasters and 95 percent of disaster-related deaths worldwide occur in developing countries (Munasinghe and Clarke 1995). In Honduras, there is a clear link between the political ecological context, differentials in socially-constructed vulnerability, and post-disaster recovery efforts, as illustrated by this study.

The vulnerability approach to the study of disasters is concerned with social processes of marginalization that produce unequal risks to hazards. The position articulated by Blaikie *et al.* (1994) is that disasters must be seen as part of everyday life, and that they are produced by the complex mix of social, political, and economic forces that produce vulnerability of people to hazardous environments. The focus is on human agency as expressed in culturally reinforced social practices. Approaching disasters in this fashion calls attention to concrete human practices and how inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity, and age can variously contribute to vulnerability to disaster. Furthermore, this approach leads to an understanding of vulnerability as unevenly distributed among people in a given place. Differential vulnerability is seen as growing out of historically situated inequalities that limit access of some to the resources necessary to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard (Blaikie *et al.* 1994:3-5). This growing body of literature on disasters in developing countries provides descriptively rich analyses of how certain political economic processes impinge on the local structures of everyday life, exacerbating social inequalities and generating

differential vulnerability and resilience to disasters (Dreze and Sen 1989; Oliver-Smith 1992; Pred and Watts 1992; Enarson and Hearn Morrow 1998). This research, however, has been characterized as "strong on societal critique and weak on practicable suggestions" (Burton *et al.* 1993:251).

The case study of Morolica illustrates the theoretical as well as the practical significance of adopting a gendered approach to the study of post-disaster reconstruction and resettlement processes. The approach of many reconstruction authorities does not always address the complexities of the whole process of post-disaster resettlement. Both disasters and relocation cause significant disruption of the affected population, who frequently requires a lengthy and difficult process of adaptation. Ultimately, the success of failure of these processes will be determined by how appropriately the needs of the affected population are articulated in the proposed interventions (Oliver-Smith 1991).

Focusing on gender, inequality, and vulnerability has obvious practical implications for responding to disasters and providing assistance to those impacted by them. A well-grounded understanding of the structures of vulnerability is the first step towards meaningful and effective mitigation measures. Understanding to what extent women, and other historically marginalized groups, have particular vulnerabilities facilitates the development of appropriate assistance programs, ones that do not exacerbate social inequalities or privilege men over women or households over individuals. It also draws attention to some of the root causes of vulnerability rather than merely dealing with the symptoms after a disaster (Blaikie *et al.* 1994).

Post-disaster reconstruction and relocation offer a window of opportunity for revisioning housing policies. Interventions should support both women's and men's

rights to secure housing, accommodating their various responsibilities in the home, work force and community. Because traditional practices often place house ownership in the hands of the male head of household, it is important to ensure that women's housing needs are also successfully addressed. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) has recognized the need to remove discriminatory laws, institutional obstacles and male-biased customary inheritance practices that limit women's housing options (UNHCS 1995). Another important factor in gender-aware shelter policy is recognizing the economic utility of dwellings. In Morolica, where income-generating activities were extremely limited, especially for women, houses frequently became arenas of production as well as reproduction. Preparing foodstuffs for sale, doing laundry and sewing for wealthier families were some activities that women did at home. The feasibility of these domestic economic projects, and women's ability to engage in other economic ventures, would be enhanced by the provision of appropriate housing. "Physical and structural improvements to housing, services and amenities would not only ease women's reproductive burdens, but help to free women's time for income generating activity and, in turn, enhance their profit margins (Chant 1996:52). However, although meeting women's practical housing needs should be a vital component of relocation programs, it alone does not challenge deeply-rooted patterns of gender and class subordination that resulted in housing insecurity in the first place. Reconstruction and relocation housing policies and practices must also support women's autonomy and self-determination.

Post-disaster reconstruction provides an opportunity to challenge established discriminatory social orders when the disenfranchised gain access to resources or employment. Organized consciousness-raising efforts can highlight women's potential

productive and creative capacity (Zaman 1992, 1995). Disaster reconstruction also offers opportunities for new social and political alignments and reorganization of access to resources. Women frequently have a prominent role in the control and distribution of food in most societies. It has been proposed that humanitarian efforts should channel food assistance primarily through women, rather than directing assistance to a presumed head of household. Research shows that this is more likely "to result in a more equitable distribution that would reach children in particular and the most needy in general" (Wiest 1998:77). On the other hand, relegating women to activities that are an extension of their traditional household maintenance responsibilities may hinder their participation in management and decision making activities. Indeed, traditional female role responsibilities associated with household care taking can prevent women from assuming larger community roles, such as disaster mitigation and disaster recovery operations. Noel (1990:1) has noted that "[t]raditionally, female participation in Disaster Management has been largely related to the role of caring and nurturing, There is limited representation by women on national and local emergency committees and their potential as a resource for organized action at all level of the managerial process has been seriously overlooked". When women do participate in the various emergency services, they are far less likely to be managers than men. As Phillips (1990) pointed out, even when in emergency management positions, women tend to be outside the "old boys network" and their ideas are perceived as suggestions rather than orders, or ignored altogether. Women's skills, roles, responsibilities, and contributions need to be examined and addressed by disaster and resettlement research and policy if the measures implemented are to be inclusive and effective.

Clearly, increased attention to the role of gender could inform disaster mitigation programs intended to empower the vulnerable, particularly women, to make their lives more resilient against hazards and crises of all kinds. However, the incorporation of gender issues into disaster and relocation research is a very recent development. Most of what has been written tends to portray women as vulnerable victims in need of special assistance. Women are typecast as hapless victims, or as "tearful and exhausted mothers struggling to get a bucket of fresh water for their children or standing passively in relief lines" (Enarson and Hearn Morrow 1998:6). While it is undeniable that women are frequently more vulnerable to disasters than men, by virtue of the subordinated position that females occupy in many societies, it is crucial to start considering women as assets, instead of just victims. Focusing on women's status as dependents, and excluding them from decision-making in post-disaster relief and reconstruction processes is myopic and misguided (Enarson and Hearn Morrow 1998:6-7).

Concluding Thoughts

It is generally recognized that, in order to continue their lives, people whose existence has been severely disrupted need to reestablish some form of stability and continuity with the past. Some of the behaviors displayed by Morolicans reflected a need to maintain some measure of continuity with their pre-Mitch construction of normalcy. The pride they derived from their efforts to have water piped in from a well close to the location of Antigua Morolica so that they could drink the same water they used to drink in their old community; their frequent reminiscing about the beauty of the old town; or the fact that they gave the schools and churches in Nueva Morolica the same names they used to have in Antigua Morolica are cases in point. These responses can be considered

as "elements in the re-establishment of emotional equilibrium and in psychological survival…" (Oliver-Smith 1986:264). On the other hand, Wiest (1998:94) noted that "[i]n crisis there is also opportunity". The strategies employed by the women and men of Morolica in their efforts to reconstruct their lives cannot be described as predominantly conservative. On the contrary, re-establishing links with their lost past allowed Morolicans to minimize dislocation and begin reestablishing a positive image of themselves which, in turn, enabled them to cope with and even embrace change. Most of the changes I have documented in this dissertation were still only emerging at the time I finished this research in Morolica. Nonetheless, many of the strategies employed by the people I worked with—from changes in religious affiliation to women's increased participation in community and economic activities—point to a tendency towards innovation. Scudder and Colson (1982), in formulating their model of response to involuntary resettlement, suggested that relocatees shift from a conservative to a more risk-taking stance, and diversify their activities and investments, when they regain their economic self-sufficiency. At the completion of this research in July of 2000 Morolicans were still completely dependent on the assistance provided by the humanitarian agencies, which would seem to disprove Scudder's and Colson's predictions. However, these scholars worked under the assumption that relocation processes were generally periods of intense stress for the affected individuals. Not so for Morolicans. After having lived in a very rudimentary shantytown for over 14 months—following two months of living in tents—they rather welcomed the move to the new town. Whether, after relocation, Morolicans were ready to respond to the opportunities presented by their new environment, or if, on the other hand, they were merely overwhelmed by the pressures

imposed on them by powerful interests in the name of development and Evangelization, will be more easily determined when Morolica becomes less dependent on the assistance provided by the religious and reconstruction authorities. It is also important to note that the model developed by Scudder and Colson was primarily conceived to analyze situations of involuntary resettlement. Development projects such as dams and other large infrastructure works are the most frequent causes of this type of displacement, sometimes referred to as "development-induced relocation", in which affected populations are compulsory resettled by the government or other relocation authorities, often with little or no community involvement in decision-making (Colson 1971; Lawson 1982; Koening and Horowitz 1988; Guggenheim 1989; McCully 1996; Indra 1999). The case of Morolica, on the other hand, is an example of "post-disaster relocation". People's attachment to place in their responses to disaster and resistance to forced relocation has been frequently reported (Oliver-Smith 1991; Hewitt 1997). The relocation on Morolica cannot accurately be described as a voluntary move in the sense that its inhabitants did not really have a choice. The original site of their community was so devastated by Hurricane Mitch that relocation became the only viable option. However, the decision to relocate was based on Morolicans' own assessment; it was not imposed on them by the government or other "outside experts". It is also necessary to stress that the importance of space does not reside in geographical abstractions so much as in the threatened ties to people and things, relations and activities. The new community, built in an area that belongs to the same municipality of Morolica, was reestablished as the capital of the municipality, and Morolicans' expected their new town to reassume its functions as the administrative, commercial, religious and educational center of the municipality. As the

mayor of Morolica expressed it in one of his impassioned speeches "*Morolica somos nosotros, sus vecinos. Mientras sigamos juntos seguirá existiendo Morolica*" (Morolica is us, its inhabitants. As long as we stay together Morolica will continue to exist).

Clearly, a better understanding of the relation between people and the physical and social space where their daily lives were carried out before a disaster can help planners make better informed decisions regarding post-disaster relocation. While the field of resettlement has started developing a systematic body of theory and knowledge, a typology of resettlement situations has yet to be developed. More research is necessary to clarify the similarities and differences between "development-induced" and "post-disaster" relocation situations, and to determine how factors such as the cause that originated the move (development project; disaster), relocatees' attitude towards the move (compulsory; voluntary), the level of community involvement (top-down; participatory), etc., affect people's responses to resettlement.

The real significance of Morolica lies in what it reveals about the ways women and men cope with overwhelming destruction and change caused not just by catastrophes or post-disaster resettlement schemes, but also by the efforts of powerful religious and humanitarian institutions. The case of Morolica further illustrates how the historical and current political, economic, religious and environmental factors that produced the condition of vulnerability of much of the Honduran population were as much a cause of the catastrophe as Hurricane Mitch itself. A recognition of the complexity of post-disaster relocation situations provides a better understanding of women's and men's needs and might result in improved long-term disaster management.

Because of the long-term nature of post-disaster responses, a longitudinal study of the situation in Nueva Morolica would provide invaluable information on patterns of post-disaster, and post-relocation adaptation. Although the future of this region, or that of the members of the affected communities, cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, it is indisputable that enhancing people's resilience to future disasters will not be accomplished without addressing the increasing deterioration of the political ecological conditions, as well as improving the quality of life of the women and men of Honduras.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE INHABITANTS OF MOROLICA (SPANISH)

Fecha de la encuesta _____

Esta encuesta consiste de 35 preguntas. Sus respuestas me ayudarán a determinar el impacto que el Mitch y la reubicación de Morolica está teniendo en la comunidad. Le agradecería su colaboración, pero no está usted obligado a responder a ninguna pregunta.

1. ¿Cuál es su nombre? _____

2. ¿Cuál es su edad? _____

3. ¿Dónde nació usted (pueblo y departamento)? _____

4. ¿Cuál es su estado civil?
a. soltera/o _____
b. casada/o _____
c. vive con su compañero/a _____
d. viuda/o _____

5. ¿ Cuántos hijos ha tenido? _____

6. ¿Cuántos viven todavía? _____

7. ¿Cual es su religión?_____

8. ¿Puede leer y escribir?   Si _____   No_____

9. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación formal que usted a alcanzado?
a. Alguna educación primaria _____
b. Completó la primaria _____
c. Alguna educación secundaria_____
d. Completó la secundaria _____
e. Alguna educación universitaria _____
f. Completó una educación universitaria _____
g. No recibió educación formal _____

10. ¿Cómo fueron afectados usted y su familia por el Huracán Mitch?
_____ Perdió todas sus tierras. ¿Cuántas? _____
_____ Perdió algunas tierras. ¿Cuántas? _____
_____ Perdió todos sus cultivos. (¿Cuáles y cuántos? _____
_____ Perdió algunos de sus cultivos. (¿Cuáles y cuántos? _____
_____ Se murieron todos sus animales. (¿Cuáles y cuántos? _____
_____ Se murieron algunos de sus animales (¿Cuáles y cuántos? _____
_____ Se hirieron o enfermaron miembros de su familia (¿Quienes? _____
_____ Otras pérdidas _____

11. Por favor dígame si usted tenía las siguientes cosas antes del Huracán Mitch.
_____ una tienda/pulpería. ¿Qúe tipo?_____
_____ un taller. ¿Qué tipo?_____
_____ un coche
_____ máquina de coser
_____ una radio
_____ un televisor
_____ vacas . ¿Cuántas? _____
_____ gallinas. ¿Cuántas?_____
_____ chanchos. ¿Cuántos?_____
_____ otros animales ¿Cuáles?_____ ¿Cuántos?_____

12. Por favor dígame si usted tiene las siguientes cosas ahora.
_____ una tienda/pulpería. ¿Qúe tipo?_____
_____ un taller. ¿Qúe tipo?_____
_____ un coche
_____ máquina de coser
_____ una radio
_____ un televisor
_____ vacas. ¿Cuántas? _____
_____ gallinas. ¿Cuántas? _____
_____ chanchos. ¿Cuántos?_____
_____ otros animales. ¿Cuáles?_____ ¿Cuántos?_____

13. ¿Cuántas habitaciones tenía la casa donde usted vivía antes del Huracán Mitch? _____

14. ¿La casa en la que vivía antes del Mitch tenía?
a. Agua corriente_____
b. Baño dentro de la casa_____
c. Electricidad_____
d. Teléfono_____
e. Letrina _____
f. Solar_____ ¿Que había en el solar? ¿Animales? ¿Arboles frutales?
_____
_____

15. ¿Qué tipo de techo tenía su casa antes del Huracán Mitch? _____

16. ¿A qué personas les pedía ayuda antes de Mitch?
a. Familiares en Morolica. ¿Quién? _____
b. Vecinos _____
c. Amigos_____
d. Personas en otras comunidades. ¿Quién? ¿Dónde viven?_____
_____
e. Autoridades ¿Quién?_____
f. Otros. ¿Quién?_____

17. ¿Y ahora?
a. Familiares en Morolica._____ ¿Quién? _____
b. Vecinos _____
c. Amigos _____
d. Personas en otras comunidades. ¿Quién? ¿Dónde viven?_____
_____

e. Autoridades ¿Quién?_____
f. Otros. ¿Quién?_____

18. ¿Pertenece usted a algún grupo, asociación o comité?
No _____
Si _____ ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Desde cuándo?_____

19. ¿A qué actividades se dedicaba su familia para obtener dinero antes del Mitch?
a. Vender Productos Agrícolas   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
b. Vender Animales   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
c. Vender Comida   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
d. Vender Artesanía   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
e. Trabajo Remunerado   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
                                ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
                                ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
f. Alquiler (casa, tierra,
maquinaria, etc.)   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____

20. ¿A qué actividades se dedicaba su familia para obtener dinero ahora?
a. Vender Productos Agrícolas   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
b. Vender Animales   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
c. Vender Comida   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
d. Vender Artesanía   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
e. Trabajo Remunerado   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
                                ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
                                ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____
f. Alquiler (casa, tierra,
maquinaria, etc.)   ¿Cuál?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Edad?_____

21. ¿Hay alguien de su familia que haya emigrado de Morolica?
¿Quién?_____   ¿Quién?_____   ¿Quién?_____
¿A dónde?_____   ¿A dónde?_____   ¿A dónde?_____
¿Desde cuándo?_____   ¿Desde cuándo?_____   ¿Desde cuándo?_____
¿A qué se dedica?_____   ¿A qué se dedica?_____   ¿A qué se dedica?_____
¿Les manda dinero?_____   ¿Les manda dinero?_____   ¿Les manda dinero?_____

22. ¿Cuáles son las tres actividades diarias que le toman más tiempo?
            Antes del Mitch   Después de Mitch
1_____   1_____
2_____   2_____
3_____   3_____

23. ¿De quién era la tierra que cultivaba su familia antes del Mitch?
a. No cultivaba _____
b. Suya propria _____
c. Alquilada   _____
d. De un familiar ____

24. ¿Cómo de grande era la finca que su familia cultivaba antes del Huracán Mitch? _____

25. ¿Cómo de grande es la finca que su familia cultiva ahora? _____

26. ¿Cuál es la cosecha que su familia cultivaba antes del Mitch?

a. Melón ___
b. Banano ___
c. Piña ___
d. Cítricos ___
e. Otras frutas ___
f. Otro (especifique) _____

g. Maíz ___
h. Frijol ___
i. Maicillo ___
j. Frijoles ___
k. Sorgo ___

27. ¿Cuál es la cosecha que su familia cultiva ahora?

a. Melón ___
b. Banano ___
c. Piña ___
d. Cítricos ___
e. Otras frutas ___
f. Otro (especifique) _____

g. Maíz ___
h. Frijol ___
i. Maicillo ___
j. Frijoles ___
k. Sorgo ___

28. ¿Utilizan pesticidas u otros químicos? Si_____ No_____ ¿Cuáles?_____

29. ¿En qué cultivos?_____

30. ¿Dónde los consigue?_____

31. ¿Desde cuándo empezó a usarlos?_____

32. ¿Que le parece más importante? (ordene de mayor a menor importancia con el 1 indicando menor importancia y el 5 indicando mayor importancia)

_____Conseguir una nueva casa
_____Reubicarse en una zona menos peligrosa
_____Conseguir tierra para cultivar
_____Conseguir un trabajo
_____Mejorar los servicios de la comunidad como escuelas, centros de salud, transporte, etc.
_____Otros. Explique_____
_____

33. ¿A qué se piensa dedicar cuando se traslade a la Nueva Morolica?
_____

34. ¿Qué es lo que más le gusta de la Nueva Morolica?
_____

35. ¿Qué es lo que menos le gusta?
_____

Esta era mi última pregunta. Muchas gracias por haberse tomado el tiempo de completar esta encuesta.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE INHABITANTS OF MOROLICA (ENGLIGH)

Interview date (Fecha de la encuesta) _____

This interview consists of 35 questions. Your responses will help me to determine the impact that Mitch and the relocation of Morolica is having on the community. I appreciate your collaboration, but you are not obliged to respond to any question.

1. What is your name? _____

2. How old are you? _____

3. Where were your born? _____

4. Marital state?
e. single _____
f. married _____
g. living with your partner _____
h. widow_____

5. How many children have you had? _____

6. How many are still alive? _____

7. What's your religion? _____

8. Can you read and write? Yes _____ No_____

9. What's the highest level of formal education you have completed ?
a. Attended primary school _____
b. Completed primary school   _____
c. Attended secondary school_____
d. Completed secondary school   _____
e. Some college education _____
f. Graduated from college _____
g. No formal education _____

10. How were you and your family affected by the Hurricane?
_____ Lost all your lands. Size ?
_____ Lost some of your lands. Size? _____
_____ Lost all of your crops. Type and amount?
_____ Lost some some of your crops. Type and amount? _____
_____ All your animal died. Type and number?
_____ Some of your animals died. Type and number? _____
_____ Some relatives got sick or injured. Who? _____
_____ Other loses _____

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11. Did you have the following items before the Hurricane?
_____ a store. Type?_____
_____ a repair shop. Type?_____
_____ a car
_____ a sewing machine
_____ a radio
_____ a TV
_____ caws . How many? _____
_____ chickens. How many? _____
_____ pigs. How many? _____
_____ other animals. Type?_____ How many?_____

12. Do you have the following items now?
_____ a store. Type?_____
_____ a repair shop. Type?_____
_____ a car____
_____ a sewing machine
_____ a radio
_____ a TV
_____ caws . How many? _____
_____ chickens. How many? _____
_____ pigs. How many? _____
_____ other animals. Type?_____ How many?_____

13. How many rooms had the house where you lived before the Hurricane? _____

14. The house where you lived before the Hurricane had
e.   Water_____
f.   Bathroom_____
g.   Electricity_____
h.   Telephone_____
i.   Latrine _____
j.   Backyard_____ What did you have in the backyard? ¿Animals? ¿Fruit
     trees?_____

15. What type of roof had the house where you lived before the hurricane?_____

16. Who did you ask for help before the Hurricane?
e.   Relatives in Morolica. Who? _____
f.   Neighbors _____
g.   Friends_____
h.   People in other communities. Who? Where do they live? _____
i.   Authorities Who?_____
j.   Others. Who?_____

17. And now?
e.   Relatives in Morolica. Who? _____
f.   Neighbors _____
g.   Friends_____
h.   People in other communities. Who? Where do they live?

_____
i.   Authorities Who?_____
j.   Others.
     Who?_____

18. Do you belong to any group association or committee?

No _____

Yes _____ Which one?_____ Since when?_____

19. What did your family do before the Hurricane to earn money?

a. Sell agricultural products.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
b. Sell animals.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
c. Sell food.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
d. Sell handicraft	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
e. Wage labor	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____

f. Rent out (house, land, machinery, etc.)

Type ?_____ Who?_____ Age?_____ Where?_____

20. What does your family do now to earn money?

a. Sell agricultural products.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
b. Sell animals.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
c. Sell food.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
d. Sell handicrafts.	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
e. Wage labor	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____
	Type ?_____	Who?_____	Age?_____	Where?_____

f. Rent out (house, land, machinery, etc.)

Type ?_____ Who?_____ Age?_____ Where?_____

21. Has anyone in your family migrated from Morolica?

Who?_____

Where?_____

Since when?_____

What does s/he do? _____

Does s/he send you money_____

22. List the three activities that take up more of your time

Before Mitch	After Mitch
1_____	1 _____
2_____	2 _____
3_____	3 _____

23. Who owned the land your family farmed before the Hurricane?

a. Didn't farm _____

b. My own _____

c. Rented _____

d. A relative's _____

24. How big was the plot your family farmed before the Hurricane? _____

25. How big is the plot your family farms now? _____

26. What are the crops you family grew before the Hurricane?
a. Melon _____   f. Corn _____
b. Banana _____   g. Beans _____
c. Pineapple_____   h. Maicillo _____
d. Citrus _____   i. Sorghum _____
e. Others (specify)

27. What are the crops you family grows now?
a. Melon _____   f. Corn _____
b. Banana _____   g. Beans _____
c. Pineapple_____   h. Maicillo _____
d. Citrus _____   i. Sorghum _____
e. Others (specify)

28. Do you use pesticides or other chemicals? Yes_____ No_____ What kind?_____

29. For what crops?_____

30. Where do you get them?_____

31. When did you start using them?_____

32. What do you think is more important? (5 = more important; 1= less important)
_____ Getting a new house
_____ Relocating to a safer location
_____ Getting new land
_____ Getting a job
_____ Improving the services in the community such as schools, health centers, transportation, etc.
_____ Others. Explain._____
_____

33. What are you planning on doing when you move to Nueva Morolica?
_____

34. What do you like the most about Nueva Morolica?
_____

35. What do you like the least about Nueva Morolica?
_____

This was my last question. Thank you very much for taking the time to complete my questionnaire.

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Maria-Jesus Olivo was born in Madrid, Spain. In 1993 she graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Florida International University, with a B.A. in Sociology and Anthropology, and a Minor in English. Her honor's thesis analyzed the impact of an eco-tourism project on a Garifuna community in Belize. She continued her education at the Center for Latin American Studies of the University of Florida, where she received her MA in 1996. Her thesis evaluated the effectiveness of participatory methods and indigenous knowledge on program adoption in a rural development project in Maní, Yucatán, Mexico. After receiving her MA she entered the Doctoral Program in Anthropology at the University of Florida, where she also completed a Certificate in Gender and Development. In the summer of 2001 she attended the International Summer Program in Forced Migration of the Refugee Studies Center at the University of Oxford, England. She has lived and studied in Spain, France, England, Mexico, Belize, Colombia, Honduras and the United States.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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